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THEOLOGICAL VIEWS,

COMPRISING

THE SUBSTANCE OF TEACHINGS

DURING

A MINISTRY OF THIRTY-FIVE YEARS,

IN NEW ORLEANS.

BY THEODORE CLAPP.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY ABEL TOMPKINS,
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PREFACE.

I AM well aware that the following pages on the Rudiments of Christianity, must strike, as devoid of novel and original thoughts, those readers who are familiar with the Unitarian and Universalist books, which, since the commencement of the present century, like stars rising one after another in a beautiful evening, have broken forth in such rapid succession. I feel and acknowledge their immense superiority in reasoning and eloquence to this or any other production which my best powers could put forth.

An especial reason for publishing, however, has influence in my particular case.

I am constantly receiving letters from various parts of the South, expressing a desire that the discourses of mine which have appeared from time to time in the New Orleans Picayune, during the last ten years, should be published in the form of a book. The following pages will be able, partially, at least, to meet this demand; for they contain the sum and substance of all my former preaching on the various topics therein discussed.

I am not so vain as to imagine that any words of mine can effect a material change in the stereotyped

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opinions of sectarian ministers, on the subject of Christianity. I do not publish with the hope of making converts to my peculiar creed. The strongest inducement that sways my mind in this particular, is an earnest desire to help those who already sympathize with me as to general principles; to interpret the Scriptures aright; to explain them in harmony with that ennobling faith which teaches the eternal progression and everlasting happiness of entire humanity.

The attentive reader of this book cannot fail to notice that the same words of Scripture or proof-texts are brought forward to establish points of doctrine which, in some respect, are widely different from each other. For example, all those passages which affirm that there will be a resurrection of all mankind, both just and unjust, and also that in said resurrection state there will be no sin nor suffering, are employed to disprove the usual and popular interpretation of Matt. 5: 22; 11: 24; Mark 9: 44, the parable of the sheep and the goats, of Dives and Lazarus, and many other parallel texts; that these words — "For as in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ *all* shall be made alive," most explicitly declare the final resurrection of the entire human race, is a position which, in our day, is universally acknowledged by theologians of every school. It is also admitted by all, that the phrase to be "*in Christ*," invariably means to be holy and happy. It follows by necessity, that if all mankind beyond the grave will be made alive *in Christ*, then they will be eternally happy. Hence, 1 Cor. 15: 22, furnishes irresistible demonstration that every text in our Bible which, in its plain, most obvious import asserts eternal punishment, is either mistranslated or misinterpreted. If partialists adduce a hundred passages to prove the doctrine of endless woe, it

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is enough to meet each and all of them with the positive declaration of Paul — "For as in Adam *all die*, even so in Christ all shall be made *eternally happy*." Hence, the necessity was imposed upon me of repeating often and often those unambiguous teachings of the New Testament, which relate to man's future destiny.

According to Scripture, God is infinite, unbeginning, unending and immutable love. Love delights in order, beauty and perfection. Consequently, it is certain that in the universe of our Father, there is nothing absolutely and intrinsically evil, disproportioned, disorderly, discordant, gross or deformed. Now, the inspired volume truly interpreted, represents the Creator as originating and permitting nothing but what is good — all things considered. The Bible teaches that all God's doings, in the several departments of Nature, Providence and Grace, with respect to each member of his intelligent empire, are the best, the only and the infallible means of his ETERNAL PROGRESSION in knowledge, virtue and happiness. Whoever lays down the contrary proposition, that our Heavenly Father either designs, accomplishes or permits the everlasting ruin of his own children, applies to Supreme Perfection, the most irreverent and blasphemous terms which the blindness, folly and arrogance of man combined can possibly utter. And what are called the evils of time are reconcilable with infinite wisdom and benevolence, only on the ground that they are the necessary, indispensable means of a greater good, — that is, a good which, without their instrumentality, could never have been realized. I have not been able to find a single text which is relied upon by sectarian ministers to prove the endless duration of sin and suffering, which is not a gross perversion of the true Scriptures, and a positive denial of our

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Saviour's declaration, that he laid down his life to redeem all mankind, and that not one, for whom his blood was shed, can be finally and forever lost.

The quotations from Trinitarian divines, that appear in the following work, though for the most part second-hand or derivative, are nevertheless equivalent in weight of evidence to original authorities. For they are to be found in Paige's "Selections," — a book of established reputation, which was published in Boston, by Thomas Whittemore, in 1840. This work proves conclusively, that from the eleventh century down to our day, the most eminent commentators, who have believed in everlasting woe, have also agreed with Universalists in their interpretation of those words and phrases which the original Scriptures employ to express Divine truth concerning the subject of punishment. This interesting fact is a sufficient reply to the insinuation that the Unitarians of the North use a peculiar Bible of their own inventing, essentially different from the common version of King James, and unsanctioned by the venerable theologians of other lands and antecedent ages. In point of fact, our peculiar interpretations of Scripture have been received by the most learned expounders of different denominations, reaching back to the time of Origen and the earliest of the Christian fathers. He who reads the English only, may be easily convinced of the truth of this assertion, by looking into those portions of Adam Clarke's Commentary, which relate to this subject.

I repeat it, the lovers of original thought and profound research, will find nothing in this volume, lofty, deep and wide enough to repay them for the time and trouble required for its perusal. It is not intended for them — but for the earnest and sincere inquirers after truth, who have not hitherto enjoyed the means of

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becoming acquainted with those great principles and leading facts of sacred literature, the knowledge of which is essential to a right understanding of the Bible. The Scriptures, when first written, were indeed plain; but ignorance of the peculiar circumstances under which they were originally composed, has led some to denounce the Word of God as countenancing, in certain instances, flagrant injustice, cruelty and licentiousness. No genuine text of the Bible can be mentioned, which, interpreted correctly, is not harmonious with the principles of our Lord's Prayer, the Sermon on the Mount, and our highest conceptions of the morally pure, grand and beautiful.

Illustrations will be found in some portions of this work, drawn from the events and scenery of the place where I now reside; but they are substantially the same as were often employed during my ministerial career in New Orleans.

LOUISVILLE, *Jan.* 1*st*, 1859. T. CLAPP

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THEOLOGICAL VIEWS.

CHAPTER I.

THE EXISTENCE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

It is thought by some of the ablest divines and scholars, that there is no good reason for the difference which the pulpit generally makes between natural and revealed religion. They contend that all the religious truth in the world is unmixed with the smallest particle of the miraculous; — one drop of the supernatural would spoil the whole compound; — and consequently correct ideas of the great First Cause come to us through a perfectly natural revealment. Ministers of every Christian name use the phrase "natural religion," to mean the spiritual truths that we learn from the contemplation of the outward, physical universe, and the study of ourselves: the words "revealed religion" are employed to signify whatever is inculcated in the Sacred Scriptures.

Perhaps it would be better to say that all the true religion which mankind enjoy may be divided into

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that which is written, and that which is unwritten. In the science of jurisprudence, gentlemen of the legal profession speak of an unwritten law. By this, they understand a body of rules, customs and principles, not created by edicts, nor statutes of legislation, but which have existed from the beginning, and are antecedent to, and independent of all literature. These rules are supposed to be founded on sentiments and perceptions inseparable from human nature; belonging to every intelligent, and accountable being on earth. They have been handed down by one age to another, through an unknown, immemorial period of time. Now, it seems to me, that there is an unwritten theology emanating from the same source, tested by the same proofs, aggrandized by the same antiquity, anterior to alphabets, and coeval with the earliest stages of civilized society. It is inscribed by an Almighty hand upon the tablets of every human heart.

Touching this subject, the most pious and enlightened men may be ranged in two great classes. The first hold that the natural, or unwritten religion, is a system of instruction so easy, plain, simple, full and definite, as to supersede entirely the use of that which professes to be founded on miracles. They allege that it is not only universal, but intelligible to the most untaught and unreflecting minds. We are referred to the following words, familiar to almost every school-boy: —

"Lo the poor Indian! whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears Him in the wind;
His soul, proud science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk, or milky way;
Yet simple nature to his hope has given,
Behind the cloud-topped hill, an humbler heaven;
Some safer world in depths of woods embraced,
Some happier island in the watery waste."

Beautiful lines! Glorious fact! There is a uni-

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versal religion; a religion that pervades all nations, the most barbarous, as well as the most civilized. It is inwoven with the classic, polished fables of Oriental, Grecian, and Roman mythologies; and breathed forth in the rude, wild notes of the savage minstrel in his forest-home. Yes, every human being has a God of some kind or other. The most benighted, and illiterate inhabitants of our globe in their instinctive musings, look out upon brighter visions than those of earth, and anticipate the hour when released from the limits and trials of mortality, they will enter upon some better world, on whose successive eternal scenes and ages, the mysterious, appalling clouds of sin and suffering will never be permitted to rest. What a complete demonstration that man is everywhere endued with a religious nature! But conceding all these statements, does it follow that the Bible is useless, or non-essential? I think not.

The second class of wise and good men referred to above, take the position that we should have no dealings with natural religion; the pulpit cannot touch it without being polluted. They repudiate, abhor, and tread upon the dictates of unhallowed, unrenewed reason. Their motto is, The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. O! natural religion, they say, will do very well for a Quarterly Review, a Monthly Magazine, the editorial of a news-paper, a poem, a romance, or the latest novel. It is to be expected in the namby-pamby discourses of that minister who preaches simply for a salary; whose highest aim is to spread before an earth-delighted and earth-seeking audience the gems of literature, and the fascinating pictures of a rich, warm, original imagination. But let not the sound, sober, staid, humble, evangelical minister of Christ contaminate the sacred desk by uttering a syllable of this unholy and unsatisfying theme.

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Now, it strikes me that the truth lies in the middle region between these two extremes. Is not this apparent? Why do we come together in church on the Sabbath? Professedly to worship Jehovah. The capacity to do this is the sublimest endowment of our nature. It bespeaks something divine, most glorious in our origin and character. It points to a destination inexpressibly grander than that of the brute which perishes. The simple fact that we can love, adore and obey a Supreme Being, proves that we are not mere worms of the dust; that we are allied to the infinite; that when we sink beneath the horizon of time instead of being extinguished, like a setting star, we shall brighten in another hemisphere, and emit the rays of a higher wisdom, and a purer bliss, than those of earth.

The belief in a God of some kind, is a natural, irresistible propensity of the human mind. It is not confined to those only on whom the light of the Bible shines. The most skeptical, and uninformed, however low, rude, or erroneous the ideas which they may cherish concerning the Divine attributes, and man's accountability, cannot help feeling their dependence on a Supreme Power. The wicked man by an inevitable law of his mental constitution lives in hopes that to-morrow may be happier than to-day. He also fears that this future will be more or less inauspicious. Consequently whatever may be his peculiar state, occupation, or fortune, he is compelled by the "Divinity that stirs within him," to realize that an agency superior to man reigns in nature — in winds, weather, tides, seasons, friends and family; in all the mingled events and circumstances of his life from birth to death. This remark is applicable to sinners of every age and character, through their entire journey to the grave; in childhood; in the giddy, thoughtless season of youth; in the headlong indulgences of a dissipated career; amid the delusive pursuits of avarice and ambition,

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and in the decrepitude and infirmities of advanced years. Yes, let men declaim as much as they please in favor of atheism, they cannot free themselves from the deep, instinctive, innate conviction, that there is a power above them, "that shapes their ends, rough-hew them how they will."

Christian ministers, therefore, should be very careful in their encomiums on the Bible, not to say a word that may seem to detract from the force and authority of natural religion. "An enlightened clergyman will be able to discern and unfold the entire consistency of revealed religion with all the lights which break in upon mankind from nature; and will avail himself of every opportunity to draw from all men's discoveries in the outward world, and in their own souls, arguments, illustrations and analogies in support of Christianity. We have reason to believe, that God, the author of nature and revelation, had established a harmony between them, and that their beams are intended to mingle and shed a joint radiance; and consequently, other things being equal, that teacher is best fitted to dispense Christianity, whose compass of mind enables him to compare what God is teaching in his works and in his word, and to present the truths of religion with those modifications and restraints which other acknowledged truths require. Christianity now needs dispensers, who will make history, nature, and the improvements of society, tributary to its elucidation and establishment; who will show its adaptation to man as an ever progressive being; who will be able to meet the objections to its truth, which will naturally be started in an active, stirring, and inquisitive age; and though last not least, who will have enough of mental and moral courage to detect and renounce the errors in the Church, on which such objections are generally built." Glorious declarations!

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We read in Scripture as follows: "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or, speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world. Because that which may be known of God is manifested to the Pagan, heathen nations. For his invisible attributes, even his eternal power and Godhead, though not discernible to the eye of the body, ever since the creation of the world, are clearly seen by the eye of men's minds, being understood by the things which he hath made, so that they are inexcusable. The apostle means that the Greek legislators and philosophers were inexcusable. Because though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God, by teaching the people what they knew concerning him; neither did they give him thanks, by making him the object of their worship, but became foolish by their own reasonings concerning the worship fit for the vulgar; and their imprudent heart was darkened, so as to relish idolatry equally with the vulgar." (Macknight's Commentary on Romans 1: 19, 20 and 21.)

"Reason and feeling if they be not the same thing in different degrees of strength, are yet so intimately connected, that no man may ever expect, on any subject, to feel deeply and habitually, who does not feel rationally. The slight sometimes thrown upon reason in religion, is an invasion of the first law of the mind, the first law of heaven. This law is 'elder Scripture,' and no more designed to be abro-

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gated by the written word, than the law of gravitation is designed to be superseded by the Bible. Scripture proceeds upon the assumption, that the intellect is to be addressed: it actually, and everywhere, addresses it. The grandest theoretical mistake of all in religion, is that by which feeling is divorced from the intellect."

When it is said, as is often the fact, that certain preaching is too intellectual for a plain congregation, or too rational for an humble audience, I must think, that either the meaning is false, or that the terms are used in a false sense. There never was too much intellect, too much reason, yet put into a sermon. There may have been too little feeling; but it does not follow that there was too much knowledge. There may have been too much dry, abstract, metaphysical, barren, recondite, and useless speculation, but not too much intellect. Some of the most plain, simple, popular, practical and devotional books in the world — such as Law's Serious Call, Baxter's Saint's Rest, the Sermons of Bishop Butler, and Dr. Paley — are admirable specimens of the closest reasoning. A genuine, just, and powerful discourse has need to be one of the keenest, closest and most discriminating compositions in the world. Such were the discourses of our Saviour. Nothing could be farther from loose, rambling, common-place exhortations. Nothing could be farther from that style, which says, "O my dear hearers, you must be good; you must be good; you must be truly pious, or be lost forever." No, his hearers by close, resistless, home-thrust argument were made to feel, and they said, "never man spake like this man."

"I verily believe, that in the ministrations of the pulpit at this day, the grand defect is not so much a defect of feeling, as it is a defect of sound and discriminating argument; and that higher powers of reasoning are precisely what are wanted in such

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ministrations to make them weighty, useful, and impressive. And it is not the intellectual hearer that most needs this, but the plain hearer who is perplexed, misled, and stupified, by the want of clear, just, instructive, and discriminating thoughts. I have that respect for human nature in its humblest forms, as to think that the highest powers of man or angel would not be thrown away upon it: and I cannot believe that nothing but truisms and commonplaces, vague generalities and unstudied exhortations, are required to teach religion to a being so nobly endowed as man." (Dr. Dewey.)

Let it be remembered, then, that faith in the reality of the Divine existence is, in every instance, derived from reason, or the light of nature. The Sacred writers do not attempt by logical reasoning to prove the being of God. They simply assert that we have been created to reverence and worship, honor and adore, love and serve that all-glorious Creator, whom we *see*, as he has made himself known in yon firmament, sun, stars, earth, continents, mountains, oceans, days, times and seasons; in our bodies with their wondrous mechanism, and powers of action, and enjoyment, and the divine faculties of our souls, enstamped with their Maker's image, and endowed with the hope and capacity of a never-ending existence. It is the invariable language of Scripture, that because we are capable by nature of *seeing* God, the most imperative obligations are laid upon us to love him, with all the heart. It is only by *seeing* God that we can commune with him, reflect his moral brightness, and receive the illuminations of his spirit. Seeing God is the door that admits us to the perception and enjoyment of those higher beauties which can raise us above mortality, sin, sorrow, death, and the grave. It is the real source of all the true happiness accessible to man on earth, or that awaits us in the boundless range of an approaching eternity.

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It is important to observe what is meant by the Scriptural phrase "seeing God." Of course he is not perceptible to the bodily eye. I am acquainted with but two methods of interpreting this language. First, it is said that we cannot see God except through the medium of proofs that demonstrate his existence to the eyes of the understanding. We must prove that there is a God before we can rationally love, honor, and serve him. This remark was often made to me by my venerable instructors in the Theological Seminary at Andover, Mass. I would not utter anything on a theme so solemn that might seem, in the slightest degree, to savor of irreverence, or even inconsiderateness. But I will venture to assert that we can no more prove a God, than we can make one; no more than we could move this globe in its annual path about the sun. All logicians thus define that process of the mind which we call proof. It consists in laying down two admitted, well-established propositions, from which a third one is fairly and necessarily deduced. Take the following example: Whatever violates morality is not honorable. Duelling violates morality; therefore duelling is not honorable.

Now to establish a God, that is an infinite conclusion according to the rules of strict logic, we must state at least, two infinite propositions, or premises, from which another infinite is necessarily inferred. The merest tyro in argumentation may see that this is impossible, for no finite reason can stretch itself across the area of infinitude — the expanse of the boundless, uncreated and incomprehensible. Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do, deeper than the underworld; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. (Job.) If proof, in logical strictness of

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speech, be the only aveuue to the realization of a God, then all mankind would be as incapable of religion as a tree or a bird, and live and die amid the gloom and despair of utter atheism — poor, benighted, trembling orphans, upon a wide, bleak, boundless waste, destitute, deserted, forlorn, and forsaken. But do not the tomes of theology and philosophical writings contain what are styled arguments in support of the proposition that there is a God. To this it may be replied, that in all the writings on this subject which have appeared from the time of Socrates to the present day, what are dignified with the imposing title, "*demonstrations of the Divine existence*," are indeed, after all, nothing more than mere assertions, that our nature in conjunction with the various objects and circumstances with which we are surrounded, compels us to believe in the reality of a Supreme Being, independently of what logicians denominate proof. The celebrated argument of Dr. Paley, in his Natural Theology may be given as an example of what I mean. The essence of what he has written may be thus expressed. "There cannot be design without a designer; contrivance without a contriver; order without an ordainer; arrangement without an arranger; subserviency or relation to a purpose — that is, means perfectly adapted to a certain end, without that end ever having been contemplated and the means accommodated to it by a Being of adequate wisdom and power."

Now all this is nothing but a formal, scholastic assertion that when we think of ourselves and the objects around us, we cannot help referring these phenomena to an Author or Creator of perfect, supreme, and boundless knowledge and benevolence. Dr. Chalmers, in his Evidences of Christianity tells us, that revealed religion, like all merely human sciences, has intuitive truths for its basis. The first

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and most important of these intuitions is the sentiment of a God. In the course of my reading I have somewhere met with the following statements. I do not know who originated them. They are not my own but may serve as a beautiful exemplification of the principle I am attempting to illustrate.

Aristotle, one of the profoundest minds of ancient Greece, declares, that, although we cannot prove a God, yet we are so organized as to feel certain of his existence. Suppose all men to be just what they now are with the exception of eyes, and the additional faculty of sight to be imparted to them at precisely the same moment. Smitten with unutterable emotions by the beautiful and sublime appearances of nature in the earth and heavens, would not the idea of a God be simultaneously awakened in their bosoms? Cicero in his Tusculan Questions takes similar ground. Montaigne, one of the most powerful authors that France has produced, remarks that an impression of Deity in the human mind exists by necessity; that it can neither be created nor destroyed by any reasonings of which we are capable. Imagine an atheist in a debating society to have pronounced a most eloquent speech in support of his favorite theory, and that at the very instant of its conclusion, some enemy should plunge a dagger into his bosom, causing immediate death, looking up to heaven his last words would be these, "O, God, have mercy upon me."

I have often seen this supposition verified in my own experience. During a long residence in that modern Golgotha, New Orleans, the melancholy duty has often devolved upon me to minister at the death-beds of skeptics. And I believe that, without a single exception, when in the exercise of reason, they have asked me to pray with them. In sorrow, trouble, sickness, and approaching death, when the present world seems to be receding forever from

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their view, the most irreligious are compelled by the impulses of an heavenly-derived nature to cast themselves on some higher Power to soothe and protect them.

Vanini, a distinguished divine who flourished in Italy and France about two hundred years ago, was tried for heresy because he advocated the doctrine above mentioned. In his defence he took a straw from the floor, and holding it up to his judges, said, "this straw is just as unaccountable without a God as the globe itself. The wild flower that blossoms in our path to-day, requires an eternal Author as much as the corolla of that celestial flower whose petals are worlds upon worlds, stretching onward throughout infinitude." His denying that the existence of God could be logically proved subjected him to the charge of atheism. He was accused, tried, and condemned to the flames. Being drawn to the place of execution, after his tongue had been torn out, he was strangled and burnt, at the age of thirty-four years. How much of the beautiful and good belonging to the dark ages has perished under the blighting touch of a cold, stern, and withering hierarchy! How many fountains of joy in the human heart have been closed up forever by the paralyzing powers of ignorance, and gloomy superstition! How many noble, bright spirits, have struggled all their days with undaunted, unshaken, and unwearied energies, and breathed their last amidst the agonies of martyrdom to bring about the blessed era of religious freedom which now illumines the Christian world.

Whatever may be thought concerning the piety of Napoleon I., the superiority of his intellect is universally acknowledged. In the famous expedition to Egypt he took with him a corps of the most learned men that France could furnish. When in the Mediterranean one lovely evening, surrounded with a circle of philosophers, who were engaged in

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discussing the merits of atheism, after a silent attention for some time, arising from his seat with that style of majesty for which he was distinguished, and pointing to the firmament filled with stars scattered in countless numbers, and with such splendid profusion, he said, "gentlemen, you may reason as much as you please against the existence of God; the awful and striking magnificence of yon canopy, the wonderful order and exact harmony of its sublime phenomena, proclaim in most impressive accents, the reality and infinitude of a wise, ever-present Maker and Ruler. There cannot be orderly movements in any department of nature or art, which are not the result of an intelligent cause." This illustrious man frequently and openly avowed his undoubting faith in the Creator of all things, and immortal happiness for the race of man in a future state. I was told when in Europe, by those most competent to give testimony on the subject, that atheism was no longer common or fashionable among the scholars of the Old World. True science perceives, as an elementary principle, that great First Cause, in obedience to whose mandates all things exist and move, without the intervention of other ideas; that is without what savans call reasoning and deduction.

Bishop Berkeley in his Minute Philosopher, contends that we see God in precisely the same manner in which we behold our fellow-beings. All my acquaintances know that there is within me something that is called a finite mind — something that thinks, perceives, reasons, remembers, imagines, loves, believes, hopes, and fears. This principle denominated *I* or *me*, or my *soul*, they can no more see with the bodily eye, than they can see the infinite spirit with the same organ. They hear my words and see my actions. These words and actions by an unavoidable law, are referred to an

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intelligent and invisible cause. Also, they listen to the glorious, significant voices, spoken by the outward, physical universe — "the music of nature, the winds that stir the mountain pine, the wailing storm, the soft-falling shower of spring; the rustling of autumnal leaves; the roar of ocean as it breaks upon the lonely sea-beach; the thundering Niagara that lifts its eternal anthem to the skies; even the bleating of flocks, the lowing of cattle, and the song of birds," &c. And as we are certain that finite minds around not only speak to us but also act — that they plant, sow, reap, build, write and fill the world with their various exploits, even so we are forced to feel the presence of an Infinite Mind, constantly sustaining in order and beauty the innumerable orbs that float throughout the illimitable fields of space; causing the life-blood to flow in our veins, manifesting itself in every blade of grass, flower, shrub-tree; in the skilful and exquisite adaptations of each animal frame to secure its sustenance, strength, speed, and beauty; in the events of each passing day; in the history of former ages; in the vicissitudes of days, nights, seasons, winds, weather, tides; in all the grand harmonious phenomena of eternal nature, and the mysterious movements of our inward, higher, and spiritual being. The ideas of Bishop Berkeley are strikingly expressed in the following familiar lines of Pope:

"All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
That changed through all, and yet in all the same,
Great in the earth, as in the ethereal frame;
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates, unspent;
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair, as heart;
As full, as perfect in vile man that mourns,
As the rapt seraph that adores and burns:
To him no high, no low, no great no small;
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all."

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We have arrived, then, at the following conclusion: the sentiment of a God is a necessary, inherent, innate conviction of the human mind: enforced upon us by the same evidence that obliges us to admit our own existence, as well as that of our fellow-beings, and the various objects of the outward universe which address themselves to our senses. Reasoning, in the logical sense of that term, can neither create, nor cancel, nor add to, nor improve this sentiment. But it is vitalized and deepened in the soul only by faith, prayer, and a holy, consistent life. No man can sincerely, and habitually strive to do his whole duty without *seeing* God. Such is the declaration of Jesus in his sermon on the Mount. He will daily commune with his Father in heaven: reflect some rays of Divine purity in his heart and life, and feel the kindling beams of that supernal wisdom which is destined to shed forever upon his spirit the effulgence of an immortal day.

Father Buffier, a Roman Catholic author, who is read and admired by theologions of every school, in his Treatise of Elementary Truths, and the Sources of our Judgments, says: "We are certain of the Divine existence, but cannot prove it. It is not susceptible of what proud, vain, and uninspired science calls absolute demonstration." The principles of this work, first published in 1724, are the same with those adopted by Drs. Beattie, Reid, and Oswald, of Scotland, under the denomination of "COMMON SENSE." The late Professor Stuart, of Andover, often expressed the opinion, that Father Buffier's Treatise was more original, and more valuable than any other book on the same subject, which was ever written.

I would say, then, to those who adopt either of the extremes above mentioned, strive to rise superior to the narrow, blighting, formulas and technics of sectarianism, whether within, or outside of the

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Church. Natural and revealed religion are not always distinguished by very distant boundaries, but in innumerable instances they approach each other and fraternize, like light and shade in a well-wrought and beautiful painting. Yes, the scene of thought unfolded to the enlightened minister by the sacred Scriptures is superlatively grand, and uncircumscribed. In the language of Job, "It is higher than the heavens, deeper than hades, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." It goes forth with the astronomer in his journeyings through the celestial systems; accompanies the chemist into his laboratory; attends the geologist and philosopher, as they trace the wonders of organic and inorganic creations; everywhere illustrating the wisdom, power, and goodness of that great Being, whose pleasure called the physical universe into existence, and constantly sustains it in order and beauty. No fact, no art, no science, no literature can be named, which does not display to the eye of a devout man numerous moral aspects, bearings, and affinities. No object whatever, embraced in the vast circumference of Nature's works, can be thought of, whose character and teachings do not fall within the legitimate range of pulpit ministrations; which, in the view of an enlarged and discerning spirit, do not set off and magnify the compass, wealth and charms of divine, eternal truth — the truth both of natural and revealed religion.

But it may be thought, that these sentiments militate against the importance, generally ascribed to the Bible, by Christian teachers. I think not. Natural religion, indeed, discovers the existence of a God, but it is utterly silent in regard to the revelations of the Gospel. It does not assure us that the Almighty Cause is our Father, that he looks upon one soul as of more value than all the material worlds which his hand has formed, and that conse-

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quently, a soul can no more be finally, and forever lost, than his own existence could be blotted out. It does not tell us on what condition sinners can be pardoned, redeemed, protected, and blessed through the ages of eternity. It affords no perfect rules to guide us in the way of a happy, holy, and useful life on earth. Without a revelation, the world never could have arrived at just conceptions of the highest virtue, nor unshaken hopes of a brighter existence beyond the grave. The late Daniel Webster, once, said: "We have derived from the Bible all the countless refinements, institutes, comforts, and blessings of civilized life, and the cheering prospect of ever-progressive glory in a future state." Natural religion does not supersede that which is revealed. Both conspire in shedding a necessary light upon the only path which can conduct us to an heavenly immortal kingdom.

In conversation with all classes of unbelievers, I have observed that the incomprehensibleness of a Supreme Being, is considered a weighty and sufficient reason for not giving their assent to this fundamental doctrine of religious faith. But let it be remembered, that if we were not to believe in the reality of anything, which is beyond the reach of human intellect — inconceivable to us, or by us; then we should sink down, and be swallowed up in the abyss of utter, universal skepticism, and wretchedness. For example, Sir Isaac Newton says, that gravitation is the bond which holds together all natural bodies however great or small; which keeps the different systems from rushing into ruinous collision, so that the whole creation of matter is afloat in space, suspended and sustained by the energy of some Almighty power. He also says, that gravitation is only the name for an unknown cause, which cannot be comprehended, or understood, yet of its reality it is not possible to entertain a doubt. We

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look through a telescope, in a fine night, and contemplate with delight the mild lustre of the evening star, the fiery face of Mars, the silver orb of Jupiter, his belts and his satellites, and the mysterious rings of Saturn. Yet the nature of what we see, and the very process of seeing are as inscrutable to us, as the God whom we love, honor and adore.

It has been proved that the same power which causes the moon to revolve, floats a ship of the line on the sea; the feather and balloon in the air; enables a narrow column of water, sustained in a tube, to raise a weight many thousand times greater than its own; pours the cataract of Niagara; makes the pressure of the atmosphere the means of obtaining water through our pumps, thus producing, at the same instant, apparently opposite, contradictory effects — the simultaneous descent and ascent of the same element. Who can fathom, or explain these phenomena? Who can tell what is the tie which unites our minds with our living bodies. Still we know that it exists. It is a matter of science, that on the retina of the eye, are painted distinctly, in all their varieties of form and color, houses, fields, groves, the sky, the faces of men, the forms of animals, and all the objects which we behold. How can so small a space take in such a multitude of exact, and definitely formed images? For it is certain from the wonderful illustrations of the eye, when uncovered by dissection, or imitated by art, that in the act of looking on an edifice, a tree, a bird, the firmament, or any visible thing, the mind sees not the external object itself, but only a picture of it on the expansion of the optic nerve, over the bottom of the visual organ. How inexplicable is the real essence of every object with which we are acquainted?

To me it is plain, that what Lord Bacon has said of science in general, is applicable to the existence,

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and attributes, the ways and doings of the Great Unknown, "Science," he tells us, "is built upon and encompassed on every side by problems, inscrutable to the human mind, this side the grave." So theology may be compared to a monument lifting its spire to heaven upon the very boundaries—the intersecting line between the visible and invisible, the finite and infinite. Imagine the circumference of our knowledge to be ever so far extended—suppose it were, this moment, to become commensurate with even that of angels—then to our eye as now all beyond this enlarged horizon would be shrouded in the darkness of the unfathomed, the boundless, and incomprehensible. Dictionaries define the *word knowledge*, by saying that it means "the just and full comprehension of the real nature of things, physical, intellectual, and moral." Proud and imposing exegesis! For knowledge, as thus explained, is coextensive with the universe of being; reaching back to the dawn of time, and forward to its consummation. It is inseparable from the existence of the Creator, who alone intuitively surveys the whole.

In strictness of speech no man, however great or enlightened in intellect, can be said to know what is the real essence of any object in creation. Further, no person ever performed a single act upon the principle of absolute knowledge. The source of all human conduct is *faith*. Faith is that process or operation of the mind, whereby we admit and entertain what seems to us to be true with respect to persons, beings, things, events, facts, or propositions of any kind whatever; except those which are proved by mathematical evidence. And concerning this last named class of objects, the learned Cudworth asserts, that we are so formed as to be obliged to have recourse to faith in order to realize their first principles. In the relations of magnitude and number, we believe there are units, lines, angles,

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squares, cubes, circles, hexagons, &c., but the absolute existence of these objects is as insusceptible of proof as that of a God.

Faith, as above defined, is a principle common in some degree to all mankind. To exercise faith is just as natural as it is to breathe; it is no less essential to man than the faculty of speech, reason, memory, imagination, joy, or sorrow. For the sake of illustration, think of the case of a little boy, who is going to school. By the help of an instructor he learns the alphabet. Even this first attainment could never have been made without the instrumentality of faith. The child by the authority of parent, or teacher was brought to believe, that certain marks called letters, are the representatives of particular sounds. In the same manner he becomes acquainted with spelling, reading, grammar, history, &c., — the higher branches of knowledge — the sublimest elements of the arts, sciences, and literature. After finishing his education he enters upon some profession or employment for life. To whatever business he devotes himself, whether that of planter, physician, lawyer, divine, politician, mariner, or mechanic, every action that he performs, from the beginning to the close of his days, is prompted and determined by those unbending laws of faith, which operate with as much uniformity as gravitation, caloric, or any other principle of the physical universe. Without that kind of faith which constrains us to admit a God, a child would be no more susceptible of education than a log of wood, or a block of marble.

Suppose again, that at fifty years of age this individual becomes an invalid. He has never been out of the place in which he was born. The physicians persuade him to travel. He embarks at Boston, New York, or Baltimore, for a foreign port. Now, it is by faith alone that he undertakes and prosecutes

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this voyage. He believes in the necessity of a change of climate, in the skill of the doctors, the soundness of the vessel, the capacity of its master, the immutableness of those laws which govern the magnetic needle, the sun, stars, weather, seasons, tides and tempests. All the instances of faith exemplified in such an enterprise could hardly be unfolded in the compass of a volume. Imagine that all those entrusted with the management of this vessel were to become suddenly incapable of exercising faith when in the middle of the Atlantic ocean, the inevitable result of such a deprivation would be doubt, uncertainty, trouble, disappointment, disaster, and destruction.

Most persons are quite unconscious of the importance and universality of this principle with respect to the temporal affairs of mankind. It is an irresistible faith that leads us to expect another day, week, month, or year. This impels us to toil in order to procure a maintenance or fortune for ourselves and families. Faith has originated the various productions of art. It has made the canvas glow with life, and the marble breathe. It has shed upon the pages of literature the light of a superlative, and undying genius. Faith keeps us from attempting to walk on water, or sleep in a furnace of fire. It prompts the merchant to act in harmony with the most recent and authentic intelligence concerning the state of markets in distant lands and emporiums. It is the basis of all contracts between man and man. Of all the capabilities of the soul, that of faith is one of the most simple, important, grand, and divine. Every moment of our accountable existence, is a moment of faith, and every action that we perform is dictated by this principle. Indeed, without it, the whole business of civilized life would cease to be carried on, and we should be shrunk up within boundaries as narrow as those which limit the mule, the horse, or the ox.

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Now this faculty of faith, which is universal *to* and inseparable *from* the human mind, (not knowledge scientifically so called,) is the basis of all religion. No person can doubt the reality of those external objects that come under the cognizance of the senses. The senses awaken within us the consciousness of a soul. Our souls, by virtue of their innate and essential endowments, cherish belief in a Being of infinite wisdom, power, and benevolence. Concerning the mode in which the Supreme Divinity exists and acts, many different theories have been broached; but the doctrine that there is an uncreated, intelligent, boundless, and omnipotent Cause of all things in themselves limited and dependent, no enlightened atheist even has presumed to deny.

We cannot, therefore, help believing that there is an Infinite Creator. We cannot avoid feeling our entire, absolute dependence on him for life, and all that is requisite to make life desirable. It is certain that we can neither escape from his presence, nor resist the determinations of his almighty will. In the emphatic language of the Bible, He holds us in the hollow of his hand. The Divine perfections wrap us about more intimately than the garments with which we are clad; than the atmosphere that we momently inhale. "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; since we are his offspring." Nor can we put an end to our existence. Though we may destroy the body, yet the soul is upheld, and preserved by the eternal, irresistible decree of its ever-present Author. What a mysterious, awful, solemn, and startling fact is our existence! It is equally apparent that the final purposes for which we have been created, must be ultimately accomplished. If every design of God be not fully and completely carried out, then he would experience the pain of disappointment, and there could be no adequate foundation for entire confidence in his

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government. Everything which exists or takes place must be on the whole, in exact accordance with the will of Heaven. To assert the contrary is the same with saying, that the plan of the Almighty may in some respects be thwarted, by contingences which he either did not foresee, or foreseeing had no power to prevent, or make subservient to the promotion of benevolent purposes.

Seeing things are thus, the following questions are those in which all reflecting persons must take the deepest interest. What is the true character of God? What are the principles, motives, or policy by which his universal administration is governed? With what feeling does he regard the children of men? What are the ties which unite us forever to his throne? It is obvious that to the mass of mankind no answers to the above interrogatories can be satisfactory, which require profound research, learning, or philosophy in order to be understood. They should present truths as plain, palpable, and striking as the meaning of the terms sun, moon, stars, firmament, earth, sea, light, darkness, times, seasons, pain, or pleasure. Now Jesus Christ came into the world to solve these problems in language intelligible to all mankind however low, fallen, ignorant or wicked. He announces the glorious truth, that God sustains the relation of a Father to every son and daughter of Adam, irrespective of character or conduct. He also teaches that this relation will last forever. It cannot be abrogated or destroyed.

Sublime announcement! We belong to the First Cause not by creation, property, and preserving power alone, but also by ineffable love. He cherishes for man, though in the lowest depths of guilt and debasement, an affection boundless as his Divinity — an affection infinite and unoriginated — an eternal, unchanging, inherent, and essential prerogative of the incomprehensible One. According to

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the teachings of Christ, the most heinous sins which men commit, cannot diminish the paternal kindness of God towards them — cannot cause him to look upon them with an alienated heart — with coldness, aversion, indifference, hatred, or wrath — cannot place them forever beyond the reach of redeeming mercy. He addresses to his disciples the following words: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." These texts declare in the most unambiguous terms, that God has infinite, unmingled love for sinners, and can never cease to exert his utmost power to emancipate them from ignorance, degradation and suffering. What is too hard for Omnipotent love to achieve? "What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" God so *loved sinners* that he sent his only begotten Son, that they might be saved. Almost innumerable are the passages of Scripture bearing a similar import.

God then is not a Being distant, distinct, foreign, and separate from ourselves — a Being with whom we have no common properties, but an ever-present, all-communicating Spirit; whose infinitude is but the infinitude of the human soul; whose sympathies for us are the same in kind, though infinitely more tender, than the purest, fondest mother cherishes for a beloved child. As the good earthly parent can neither hate, nor intentionally hurt his own offspring; so the Supreme Father can neither abhor,

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nor injure any creature whom he has called into existence. As the sun constantly imparts light, life, and warmth to the physical globe, so God communicates, without intermission, to the moral world — the world of mankind — those influences which are requisite to make it more and more like himself — to unfold and enlarge those mental and moral powers which constitute his own glorious image. Jesus Christ tells us that the Father sent him into the world to make all mankind ultimately partakers of everlasting life — the life of God — of boundless wisdom, order, beauty, and beneficence — that they all might become warmed by beams from the inexhaustible Fountain of Light, and feel from the impulses of his Spirit in their breasts that they are indeed his ransomed, redeemed and forgiven children. We cannot cherish the sublimest form of Christian love so long as we suppose that God can do anything himself, or allow anything to happen, which will conflict with our final, supreme, and highest good, both for time and eternity.

Suppose a son could be made absolutely certain, that his earthly father would be permitted by a Merciful Providence to see him breathe his last. Let this parent possess all the great and glorious attributes which can adorn humanity — wisdom, piety, paternal kindness, the most generous sympathies — and in addition the resources of inexhaustible wealth. To complete the imaginary case, let this son be perfectly assured that his father could never become an enemy, could not harbor indifference, coldness, hatred, nor anger towards him, whatever might be his misdoings and follies; but, that on the contrary his utmost skill and energies would be perseveringly employed to supply his wants, relieve his embarrassments and promote his highest welfare, even when plunging into the lowest depths of guilt, unworthiness, and degradation; and to the closing hour

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of his mortal existence; under such circumstances, what on earth would appear so precious to his son as that father's love? How unspeakably dear to him would be the thought, that he had one friend to lean upon whose deep and tender affections were life-long and immutable? Could he hate such a father? Impossible! Now such a parent, freed from imperfections, and raised to infinitude, is the Father whom Jesus has unfolded, that we might be soothed and sustained by an unfaltering trust in his infinite, eternal, and unchanging love.

"The greatness of the Deity, when separated in our thoughts from his parental character, tends especially to crush our hopes, and fill us with despair. We do not honor God when we think of him with servility, and dread of his displeasure on account of our sins. The most hardened, selfish, and contemptuous of transgressors may do this. Indeed, it is almost impossible to convince a bad person that the Supreme One is not an omnipotent and avenging Creator. But when we realize that God looks upon us with infinite forgiveness; that he has made and placed us here to be partakers of his own perfections; to be the representatives and ministers of his boundless benevolence: that nothing is more dear to him than to commune with, beautify and enrich our souls — such views make their recipients holy, raise man from earth to heaven, and bind him by the most pure and ennobling ties to the throne of his Maker. Such views fill the soul with refining awe, wonder, and admiration, as well as the most exquisite and transporting delight, and nothing else can accomplish these results." (Channing).

Jesus taught incessantly, that the knowledge of God is the only avenue to genuine happiness. "This is eternal life to *know Thee* the only true God." Imagine a community in which no vices nor immoralities prevailed — in which reigned unmingled moral

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excellence; purity, truth, justice, and kindness for each other, but, at the same time, entirely devoid of faith in a Supreme Being. Could they be happy in this state without religious hopes and prospects? I answer in the words of the Gospel, "they could not live by bread alone." Though well fed and well clothed, and surrounded with the highest blessings of physical civilization, their minds would long for something more satisfying than the frail, limited, and transitory enjoyments of earth. Without God the world in its best state is vain, inadequate and inefficient — filling its votaries with unrest, care, weariness and anxiety. We want a greater, better, and more permanent inheritance — a spiritual inheritance that can meet and replenish the essential aspirations of our ever-widening and immortal minds. But let the members of this fancied society cease to be prayerless, and atheistical — let them become acquainted, and deeply impressed with the attributes of their Creator, as manifested in the departments of Nature, Providence, and Grace; and cherish the sublime hope of enjoying his presence and protection, when this outward world — its wealth, its fashions, and its pleasures shall have vanished forever, — then would their happiness be substantial and complete; then would they soar as on eagles' pinions above ennui, sorrow and temptation; then would they become daily more and more assimilated to the perfections of an infinite Father, and be able to centre on him their strongest sympathies, and noblest hopes.

The Hon. Henry Clay, near the close of his life, spent a winter in New Orleans. One evening when he had no company in his room but myself, I had the pleasnre of listening to his sentiments on a subject, which to reflecting minds is of all others the most interesting — a future state of existence. He had just heard of the death of an intimate friend.

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With reference to the melancholy intelligence he spoke in terms nearly like the following: — "My friends are fast falling around me. What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue! I have tried the world and found its emptiness. My own experience bears testimony to the truthfulness of Scripture that assures us we were created subject to unavoidable cares, trials, frailties, and suffering. My dear sir, how utterly disconsolate should we be without something better to hope for beyond the grave. Here we are destined to *know delight but by her parting smile*. If there be no succeeding existence, we shall soon be dashed from these beetling cliffs of time, and sink in a fathomless abyss to be seen no more. Nothing appears to me so precious as the Cross of that Redeemer who declares himself to be the resurrection and the life; who enables the believer to look away beyond the ruins of the grave, the boundaries of time, and the visible creation, to gaze upon the ineffable, divine, beauteous, and ever-progressive scenes of a land immortal. Really, sir, I do not see any use of a God with respect to man, unless it be his good pleasure, in infinite mercy, to make these vicissitudes of mortality, pain and disappointment preparatory to our final introduction to the joys of another, and better world."

Instructive spectacle! Here was a man remarkably prosperous, and powerful, great in genius and achievements, whom this nation had fairly idolized for half a century — whose fame had crossed oceans and continents, and reached the remotest boundaries of the civilized world — solemnly proclaiming in the most expressive language, that all merely terrestrial glories appeared to him less than nothing in comparison with the boundless love of that Father, whom the Son of God has revealed, as the ever-living Friend and Benefactor of the human race. How sad and mournful is the condition of those,

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who have passed through threescore years and ten, and have no God to lean upon, as earth is receding forever from their view. At every step they drag a chain more galling, heavy, and oppressive than that which visibly restrains, and degrades the unhappy convict. The friends and companions of their earlier and later years are gone. The retrospect of life presents to their view a dark, desolate expanse — a confused, disorderly, discordant assemblage of reminiscences both painful and mysterious — a mere mass of rubbish — the rubbish of cares which brought no peace, and follies the recollection of which settles like a freezing damp upon their spirits. Their prospects of the future are as cold and narrow as the tombs to which they are hastening. All which they have known, loved and doted on, has either already disappeared, or is rapidly crumbling around them. There is no outward prop on which they can rest; in the widest circumference of their thoughts there is no object which can awaken hope and enthusiasm; no asylum to which they can betake themselves in trouble, disaster, sickness, or death.

The supreme object of Christ's mission into this world, was not to proclaim the existence of God, but to communicate to mankind correct views of his character, government, and purposes. To use the words of Mr. Clay, I would say that Jesus came "to make us certain that the works of creation, the indescribable vicissitudes of a mortal life; these strange scenes of want, weakness, pain, privation, and disappointment are the inscrutable unfoldings, and counsels of infinite love — and are working to the production of results only great and good, only glorious and beneficent." I repeat it, Jesus Christ appeared on earth to make it certain that God is eternal, infinite, unchanging life, light, truth, wisdom, power, justice, love, beauty, beneficence, gentleness, tenderness, mercy, forgiveness, forbearance, long-suffering,

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and compassion — to demonstrate how impossible it is for either "death, or life, or angels, or principalities, or powers, or things present, or things to come, or height, or depth, or any other creature, (any finite being, law, or influence), or any amount of guilt, finally and forever to separate us from the love, and presence of that Father, who created us that, through an immortal being, we might approximate nearer, and nearer to the standard of his boundless perfections.

It is self-evident, that the Creator is *alone responsible* for the ultimate results and consequences of what he has been pleased to create. He could no more share this responsibility with others, than he could share with another the original act of creating. We cannot ascribe to the Almighty one more flagrant injustice and folly, than to suppose he has created a race of beings, on purpose to render them sinful and miserable, or whom he has invested with a free-agency which he cannot control, and make harmonious with the order, beauty, and wisdom of a perfect universe. No position is more obvious, than that the final, everlasting condition of man must be in accordance with the will of him who is their *sole* Creator, and *only* Governor, and is therefore obligated to take care of them, and make them good and happy. Whatever God wills, or wishes, must be accomplished, because he is the only Potentate, doing his whole pleasure in heaven and earth.

The single text, "*Our Father, who art in heaven: thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever,*" expresses at it seems to me all the vital, essential doctrines of the Christian system; the attributes and providence of God; redemption through his Son; man's strict accountability; the bestowment of forgiveness on all sincere penitents; the necessity of holiness in heart and life; our common brotherhood, and common destination beyond the

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grave. More of moral and spiritual truth than is conveyed by these words, I suppose we shall not be able to receive, till we become familiar with the objects, wonders, scenery, and dialect of the world eternal. I could quote numerous authorities if there were space, to show that this view has been sanctioned by eminent divines in every age of the church. That celebrated professor, Dr. Alexander, of Princeton Theological Seminary — (one of the most pious and learned ministers ever known in the United States) — when in a dying hour uttered the following words: "The only thought that now supports me, is the simple teaching of the Gospel, that the Father sent his Son to redeem man from sin, death, and eternal ruin." The peculiar doctrines of that theology to the defence of which his life had been devoted, faded away and were forgotten, as the glories of a higher state of existence were opening before his spiritualized, and strengthened vision. Professor Stuart, of Andover, made a similar confession in his last moments. So did Dr. Channing. Indeed, it is the common sentiment breathed forth by the most sainted disciples, as the cold shadows of the grave deepen around them, and they are permitted to catch some glimpses of that sublime world to which death is the avenue.

The doctrine that God is our Father solves the problem of human life. It is a pledge that an infinite friend ordains our respective allotments however dark, or sad they may seem to be; that our whole life, through all its stages and fortunes, its mingled web of events, incidents and vicissitudes; its alternations of health and sickness, joy and sorrow, prosperity and adversity; and even our sins and follies will be made the means of an everlasting progress in knowledge, virtue, and bliss. If God is the Father of mankind he cannot help loving them; he cannot tread upon and sink them into the pit of

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ruin, because they are vile, disobedient, foolish, deceived, and debased. To me the most glorious revelation of the Gospel is the certainty, that the Creator cherishes towards the most proud, self-willed, haughty, contemptuous, hard-hearted, reckless, and impenitent sinners, the spirit of inextinguishable mercy and gentleness; an all-subduing sympathy; an omnipotent, unchanging love — a love that mingles with disapprobation of the offence, that pure, divine, eternal, triumphant pity which cannot fail in due time to reform and save the offender, however dark, stern, stubborn, and savage may be his character.

We are told in the sermon on the Mount that God is determined to exercise beneficence in behalf of the erring, just in proportion to their actual necessities — just in proportion to the depth of their fall, wretchedness, and debasement. Throughout the New Testament the doctrine is inculcated, that no soul can become so utterly corrupt and steeped in iniquity as to be beyond the reach of recuperation; that redeeming mercy through Jesus will, some time or other, enable all sinners to be emancipated from their guilt, weakness, and mortality, to enter upon a higher, and nobler existence — an existence vast as their wishes, permanent as their being, and binding them to the throne of the eternal with ties that can never be dissolved. No persons can receive this sublime faith without becoming holy and happy, and nothing else can make them so. Yes, let the most ignorant and erring be brought fully to believe that God looks on them with an infinite love; that he is doing all in his power to secure their highest good; that it is as impossible for him to allow them to be destroyed forever, as it would be to annihilate himself, or the universe over which he presides; and that moment they would begin to cherish genuine piety; become enamored of the charms of virtue;

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cease to indulge and obey the body; be freed from all painful doubts, distracting fears, guilty and dishonorable passions; enter into a union of love with all mankind; and realizing and adoring the Supreme Intelligence that directs the beautiful though evanescent scenes of this mortal state, they would have no fears of being crushed out by the forces of time, nature, death, or the grave, but be soothed and sustained by an immovable assurance that they were made to explore through eternity, with ever increasing delight, the wonders of their Creator — the wonders of his vast, boundless, and magnificent empire.

They who hold that God can overlook, forget, hate, despise, or consign to hopeless ruin one of his own creatures, do not understand the peculiar glory and attributes of that Father, whom Christ has revealed for our hope and encouragement. To me it is plain, that it is just the same thing for God to destroy his children by a direct influence of his own, as to permit them to destroy themselves. It would be utterly impossible for me to adore and reverence a Creator who could even expose me — render me liable to a pain or evil from which no benefit could possibly accrue to myself or others.

Let me believe that all the creatures whom God has made are the objects of his continual, and merciful care; that the entire universe is embosomed in his infinite goodness; and that all the evil and suffering around and within me are overruled by him, and made the means indispensably necessary to the greatest good. Let me believe that not a breath of air moves; not a withered leaf falls to the ground; not a single pang is endured; not a sin is committed; not the most inconsiderable thing occurs without the permission, knowledge and appointment of our Heavenly Father. Let me believe that every moral agent, whether good or bad, whether just or unjust, has an Almighty Friend, who is ever present

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with him, who never for a moment remits his love, who is continually directing upon him the eye of omniscience, and the care of unerring wisdom — who cannot be deceived as to his real interests, and is infinitely disposed, and able to promote those interests, and will do so through endless ages; then, and not till then shall I have the power to form some faint, shadowy, and distant conceptions of that exalted character ascribed to the Supreme Parent in the teachings of the New Testament. Standing on the lofty pinnacle of such a faith, I look out upon a boundless prospect. The glories and distinctions of earth vanish. Its evils let go their grasp on my mind. I am emancipated from their thraldom. Sources of joy are opened in my soul such as angels have — a joy calm, gentle, serene, placid, and immovable. With patience and cheerfulness I submit to my allotments however humble and trying. In one scale of the balance I put the events and experiences of this transitory life, in the other that exceeding weight of glory, which is to be continually expanding through eternal ages. Every day I resist and renounce the false, and triumphing over the vile, sordid and selfish, rise in those higher attainments of wisdom and worth which will cross the grave, and ever grow more beauteous amid the scenes, and experiences of immortality.

Science has discovered a law by virtue of which every particle of matter in the universe gravitates towards every other; every mass, however large, is attracted by every particle however small: and this law keeps all the heavenly bodies in their proper orbits as they revolve in everlasting space, and makes a happy, orderly, harmonious creation. "The sun attracts the waters of the earth; and if it be those of the stagnant pool, foul with the contagion of death, the very process of its attractions so purifies them, that when they fall in dew or rain upon

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the flowers and grass, they become pure as the fragrant bosom of the rose itself. So the moral government of God attracts, and wins, and will eventually purify all his intelligent creatures by the silent, life-giving, resistless influences of his Holy Spirit.

"The sun cannot be made to repel the waters of the earth. To render this possible, its present nature must be destroyed, and an opposite one given to it. So God can never repel the souls that have been made by him, of him, and for him. To do so, the law of his nature must be completely changed, and attributes antagonistic to those which he now possesses be placed on the throne of universal empire. Wherever there are worlds visible or invisible, God created them, with all which they contain. Whatever worlds God has created, he governs; and whatever he governs he must attract, purify, and make obedient to his will; and the very process by which they are upheld and directed, will bring them into a oneness with the spirit of their Author. God could not uphold the wicked forever without making them good. The very act of sustaining them in existence must produce finally their sanctification.

"Banishment, then, from the presence of God, who created all accountable beings of himself, and for himself, and maintains them in life, and blesses them only because he loves them, whether here or hereafter, is a moral impossibility. How can the Creator banish the spirits that are the out-growths of himself? How can his nature, law, or government repel them? They may try with all their power to forsake God, and cast off allegiance to him, but as a particle of dust must, of necessity, always feel the law of gravitation binding it to the great whole, so by virtue of an immutable law, all moral beings must be forever drawn towards divine purity and godliness, here and hereafter, in all worlds visible, or

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invisible, mortal and immortal, so long as God is God — so long as he sustains to intelligent creatures the relation of their intelligent Creator."

This, then, is the sum of our Saviour's teaching with respect to the fatherhood of God. Because he is the universal Father of the children of men, it is impossible that he should allow them to perish everlastingly. Natural reason and religion proclaim the existence of a great First Cause. They teach his universal government and providence. But they do not inform us definitely what are his feelings towards sinners; for what purpose they were created, nor what disposition will finally be made of them. Here the parable of the Prodigal Son, and other discourses of Jesus come to our aid and teach us that sinners are as precious in the sight of God as those pure immaculate spirits before the throne who have never transgressed; and that they are bound to him by the ties of an incomprehensible, almighty love — a love that can never change, waver, tire, or fail — never intermit for a moment its depth, fervor, strength, or tenderness — a love which sent forth the Son of God to seek and save every son and daughter of Adam, and confer on them the blessings of everlasting life. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! For God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

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CHAPTER II.

THE BIBLE.

In this chapter I shall endeavor to give a summary of the views which I have formed concerning the authority, usefulness, and inspiration of the Sacred Writings. It is the peculiar glory of man that the Creator has made him capable of endless improvement in knowledge, moral excellence, and happiness. And it is the distinguishing privilege of those who dwell in this land of freedom, that they enjoy in the greatest variety and exuberance, the means of intellectual and spiritual growth. Among these means, books hold if not the very first, at least a very important and prominent place.

Our Saviour enjoins upon us an habitual, systematic, thorough, most attentive perusal of God's Word. "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life." In the original the word rendered "*search*" means to examine, to scrutinize a subject with the utmost diligence, impartiality, and carefulness. Now, it may be asked, what is the use of reading the Bible in such an attentive, and discriminating spirit? Can it afford any help as to our temporal affairs? Can it shed a light to facilitate the progress of the merchant, banker, agriculturist, physician, lawyer, statesman, artist or any other class of mankind, in their respective schemes, and en-

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deavors to obtain the temporal advantages of independence, wealth, luxury, learning, power, or aggrandizement? These questions have often been propounded to me by the most sincere and honorable inquirers after truth. Let me, if possible, give them a fair, and candid answer.

The claims of any volume whatever to a thorough perusal depend entirely on its character. The reading of a bad book may do us unspeakable hurt; may corrupt our hearts, and our lives. Quintilian, one of the most distinguished educators of his time, remarks, that "in the training of youth, no object has appeared more important to wise men of every age than to excite in them an early, deep, and strong relish for useful reading. From this, to the discharge of the higher and more important duties of life, the transition is easy and natural. Of those minds which have this elegant and liberal turn, the most pleasing hopes may be entertained. On the contrary, insensibility to the charms of literature may justly be considered a bad symptom in the young, and supposes them inclined to grovel and lose themselves in low, vulgar, and debasing gratifications, or at the best, to drudge through the world, engaged only in the ordinary, common, and least ennobling pursuits of life." Beautiful extract!

A good book on any science, an historical work ably composed, a treatise on philosophy, as well as the pages of poetry, eloquence and fiction; the newspaper, the periodical and lighter forms of literature, continually exhibit in a greater or less degree, those thrilling sentiments and lofty examples, whose natural effect is to nourish in our souls a generous spirit; love of true glory; contempt of whatever is mean, base, and wicked, and admiration for every thing really great, noble, and illustrious. Yes, the habitual reading of such productions, by an almost imperceptible, unconscious influence dilates

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a man; lifts him upward; makes him better and happier. Literature has been called the handmaid of religion, whose office is to dress her charms, and make them more beloved. It illustrates and adorns spiritual truth, adding immensely to its attractions, and to the clearness and power of its communications. Who has not often heard the sublimest doctrines, to a degree, lowered, and deformed by being expressed in a coarse, and slovenly style, and delivered without beauty and appropriateness of elocution?

It is worthy of notice, that our Saviour rests the duty of reading the Scriptures on this identical basis — its tendency to elevate, refine and spiritualize the mind. Let me repeat the following paraphrase of his words. "Make yourselves well acquainted with the Bible. Such an acquaintance will enrich your intellects with the treasures of heavenly wisdom, open and purify your consciences, improve your good affections, exalt your aims, rectify your taste, ennoble your character and lives. It can tell you who God is; what he intends to do with you; why you have been created; what is your eternal destination. It can free you from all distracting doubts, and gloomy apprehensions about a future state; subdue your depraved, boisterous, ungoverned passions, and fill your bosoms with the tranquilizing influences of a hope which stretching beyond the horizon of time, lays hold of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading." For all these rich blessings are comprehended in the New Testament phrase "eternal life."

What a wonderful invention is a book! It takes the precedence of all other means of mental improvement, though familiarity has made us almost blind to its pre-eminent and distinguishing glories. If I may be allowed the metaphor, it is a machine by which we can embody the invisible, etherial exercises of the human soul, and set them up like an

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outward, unwasting monument of marble or brass, to be gazed upon, analyzed, admired, and followed, as our refuge, guardian and guide on the journey of life. Yes, it is a material instrument by which true thoughts and noble feelings may be preserved and transfused from soul to soul, from parent to child, from preceptor to pupils, from friend to friend, and from age to age. In this way the rich and constantly accumulating wisdom of the world is laid up as in a magazine, an immense, inexhaustible storehouse for the benefit of all mankind. Each who chooses can take from this common stock, whatever is wanted to feed, and nourish his intellectual and moral nature. When I read the Bible, what a long train of saints, prophets and sages, come forth from the dim mists of an antiquity, reaching back at least thirty-five hundred years, to communicate to me the noblest thoughts which have ever been expressed concerning God, man, nature, time, the charms of moral excellence, and the destinies which await us in a future state.

Considered merely as a human composition, the Bible is unquestionably the most interesting book on earth. The illustrious Sir William Jones (a more competent judge never lived) says, "I have carefully and habitually perused the Scriptures, and am of opinion that this volume, independent of its divine origin, contains more grandeur, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books in whatever language they may have been written." I once heard Dr. Dwight, of Yale College say, "If the Bible had no divinity, if it were simply the creation of superior, uninspired genius, even then it would be better worth reading than any other volume within our reach."

History is a source of invaluable knowledge. It spreads before us the prominent facts and events

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which have occurred in distant times and lands; it introduces us to the most eminent characters that have lived, and enables us, as from a lofty mountain, to take a comprehensive view of the general course of human affairs. Now the Bible is the oldest classic in human literature. It travels over forty, or fifty, perhaps sixty centuries of man's eventful story. In it as a mirror, we behold the origin, advancements, and retrogressions of states, and nations from the beginning. It presents a beautiful panorama of the rise and fall, fates and fortunes, opinions and customs, manners and erudition, religion and philosophy, arts and government, which belonged to the generations that have acted their parts before us on the theatre of mortality, and have passed into that world from whose bourne no traveller returns. Destroy this book, and the most brilliant lights of history would be extinguished, and it would be impossible for us to form a correct, connected, and cheering view of Divine Providence.

Scripture gives us the most pure and lofty ideas of moral beauty. And were there no other use in the writings of the Old and New Testament, than the clear, striking principles of ethical science which they reveal, this would justify the most extravagant encomiums which have been bestowed on them by Christian theologians and philosophers. The compass, grandeur, and refinement of the delineations which they have recorded on this theme, strike my mind as divine, wonderful, and superhuman. All the inspired writers, from Genesis to the Apocalypse concur in telling us that the essence of virtue is a deep, intense, absorbing and disinterested love. In this they place the highest good of man, and the intelligent universe. One might be inclined to ask, in what consists the superlative wisdom of this doctrine? I reply, in its truth, its simplicity, its all-subduing power; and especially the fact that it repre-

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sents evangelical holiness to be within the reach of every man, whether high or low, learned or unlearned, rich or poor, Pagan or Christian, Jew or Mahometan. If true morality depended on rare and difficult attainments, accessible to only the erudite, and philosophical few, then all could no more acquire it, than all could draw the highest prize in a lottery. But the faculty of *loving others sincerely* is a universal endowment of the human mind, as much so as speech, reason, memory, hope, fear, love of pleasure, or aversion to pain.

Another fact is worthy of notice; all the inspired writers from Moses to St. John, give us the same definition of virtue, or morality. It seems to me, that such a harmony can be explained only by supposing that they derived their ideas from a common source—divine inspiration. For these authors were characterized by all possible diversities of age, genius, culture, tastes, pursuits, customs, manners, and allotments in life. Further, they were so separated by time and place, that it was not in their power to have conspired together to palm upon the world a fabulous system of ethics. When we examine heathen moralists, priests, and philosophers, running on the same parallel of history, it is almost impossible to find any two authors entirely unanimous on this subject. In general they present to our view, a gross, unlovely, confused, discordant, self-contradictory, and chaotic mass of conceits and speculations. The most enlightened writers of Greece and Rome, sanctioned many moral principles and practices which are repudiated by all Christian nations as corrupt, and abominable. "But the morality of the Bible has stood the scrutiny of ages; and in proportion as men's moral sentiments have been refined, its beauty has been more seen and felt. To suppose it invented, is to suppose that its authors outstripping their age, had attained to a

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singular delicacy and elevation of moral perception and feeling. But these attainments are not reconcilable with the character of its authors, supposing it to be a fiction; that is, with the character of habitual liars, and deliberate, impious deceivers."

The celebrated Rosseau, who is usually classed among Deists, asserts that the only perfect character which can be found in human literature, is that of the Son of God as delineated in the Gospels. According to his statement, it is radiant with every form of intellectual and moral excellence, which man can possess, or conceive of. "If Socrates lived and died like a philosopher, Jesus Christ lived and died like a God." Take his life as a whole, there is nothing in it defective — nothing wanting, and nothing superfluous; yet, this character was neither understood nor admired by the great men of antiquity, either of Jewish or Gentile origin. Judged of by their standards it had neither grandeur, nor comeliness. We are told that wise men, poets, philosophers, and orators, in every age, have understood, and extolled the charms of real goodness. For myself I have never been able to find an author outside of the Bible, existing before the advent of Jesus, or contemporary with him, whose theory of virtue is not essentially erroneous. All languages, from the remotest antiquity, that have come to our knowledge, possess indeed words to signify what is *just, true, good, and immaculate.* Yes, from the beginning, certain persons have been called moral, pure, righteous, and honorable, in every community under heaven. But no epic, no poem, no drama, no history, no biography, except the Bible, as is now universally acknowledged, contains even the description of an absolutely perfect man. It is unspeakably important, that the world should be able to gaze upon the ideal of a person, supremely, transcendantly, and completely good. Such an ideal, is enough to

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regenerate mankind, and raise them to millennial glory.

Rationalists may declaim as much as they please concerning certain incongruities, and imperfections discoverable in the life of Jesus as drawn in the Gospels; yet, as I think, no candid, unprejudiced, well-informed man, can read the New Testament for himself, without the most decided, overwhelming conviction, that the character of the Son of God as therein portrayed, shines with all the enrapturing and diversified charms of moral excellence. I have studied this book daily, and with all the discrimination in my power for the last forty years. Repeatedly, have I read through the evangelists to see if I could not detect some flaw, inconsistency, or shortcoming in the narratives which they have given of the sayings and doings of Jesus — narratives open, frank, simple, natural, unlabored, unostentatious, and bearing all the marks which critics say invariably distinguish truth from fiction. I have looked at the criticisms of Strauss, Newman, Theodore Parker, and others of the same school, in relation to this topic, and were my salvation dependent on doing so, I could not name a single defect, fault, weakness, or deformity — a single item of the incongruous, disproportioned, unsuitable, or imperfect in the life and character of the author of our religion. "On the contrary, throughout all the circumstances of unparalleled trials, perplexities, and temptations, he never, for a moment, loses his identity: always shows the same great and extraordinary mind acting in harmony with itself, always displays those moral beauties which command the unqualified admiration of the world; and which the illiterate Jews who wrote the Gospels, could no more have invented, than the most uncultivated savage in the forests of America could have composed the Hebrew Scriptures, or Homer's Iliad, or Newton's Principia!

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Suppose a distinguished author of our own or some foreign land, should this year publish a novel, containing a simple, natural, beautiful picture of some tried, suffering, tempted man, who never in a single instance yielded to a base, sinful indulgence, who was always, and only noble and virtuous in thought, word and deed — always upright, unsullied, true, faithful, self-sacrificing, and disinterested in his principles and conduct. Let the literature of the book possess the highest order of attractions. Let not one low, improper, unhallowed thought, or feeling pollute its fascinating pages. And, especially, let its hero be exhibited to us not by words and epithets only, but by setting him before us in the various scenes and acts of a remarkable, and glorious life. Let him speak, and act with perfect wisdom, propriety and loveliness in the several relations of childhood, youth and maturity — the relations of son, brother, parent, friend, neighbor, fellow-citizen, patriot, saint, martyr, and philanthropist, — ever displaying that unblemished excellence which commands universal admiration, and embraces the chief welfare and exaltation of humanity. Would not such a work be undoubtedly popular? Would it not give pleasure to all classes, high and low, learned and unlearned? Would it not interest the imagination and touch the heart and ennoble the life of every person who perused, understood, and appreciated its consummate, ineffable beauties? Could any mind form a just estimate of the value of such a composition? It would do more to promote the happiness of a people, than inexhaustible treasures of silver and gold.

Now the biography of Jesus resembles in essential features, and characteristics, the volume whose existence I have imagined. As to its morality, it stands alone in the world, and is incomparably superior to that of the loftiest characters described in the pages of uninspired literature. The habitual perusal

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of it opens the highest and noblest sources of enjoyment, sanctifies the heart and the life, and presents the strongest inducements to enter upon that course of improvement here, which is to run on brightening in glory and bliss, through the ages of eternity. No one can habitually read the evangelists, without loving and confiding in Jesus Christ; without making his spotless character, and heavenly life, the model of his own; without becoming inspired with those principles and hopes which fortify the soul against the assaults of external evils,—the vicissitudes of time, and nature; the terrors of sickness, want, pain, persecution, death, and those gloomy anticipations of future woe that embitter the souls of the weak, ignorant, superstitious, and unbelieving. O! who can believe that such a morality as is exemplified in the life of Jesus, emanated from the most ignorant, debased, and wicked persons that have ever disgraced the name of man? The vilest, coarsest, most vulgar imposters, deceivers, and hypocrites? Could such persons have invented Christ? No more than they could have invented sun, moon, and stars. Let us be consistent and acknowledge then, that the Christ of the Gospels is an effect of which the only adequate cause is God. As Rosseau says, to suppose the New Testament false, is to admit what is infinitely more incredible, than any thing which is implied in the proposition, that it is true and divine.

Once more, the Bible sheds more light on the subjects of political science than all the other books I have seen. Twenty years ago, Dr. Spring of New York, published some lectures, to illustrate the obligations of the world to the Bible. Among other things he endeavors to prove a doctrine, which Madame De Stael has asserted in her "*Influence of Literature*," that had it not been for the introduction of Christianity, all nations, long ere this, would have relapsed into utter barbarism. In his judgment, to

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this book we are indebted for all the sciences, arts, inventions, institutes, advantages, and refinements of our present civilization. He affirms that the personal, social, and political rights of man, are much better defined, and laid down by Moses and Jesus, than by any uninspired writers of either ancient or modern times. The Declaration of American Independence, which is the basis of all our free institutions was derived from the preaching of Jesus, who solemnly and repeatedly declares, that all mankind are children of the same Heavenly Father, and are under imperative obligations to obey the rule of life expressed in the following text: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

"Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," is the teaching of Jesus. One of the most unfounded objections to Christianity that has ever been made is that it is designed, and adapted to subject the many to the few. So far from this, it is the only religion which honestly and effectually consults the interests of all mankind, without distinction. It is the only religion by which the poor can defend their rights, and resist the encroachments of the proud and oppressive. "The cultivated heathen," says Tholuck, "were offended at Christianity precisely for this reason, that the higher classes could no longer have precedence of the common people." Montesquieu wrote the following sentence: "Christianity is a stranger to despotic power." "The religion," says De Tocqueville, "which declares that all are equal in the sight of God, will not refuse to acknowledge that all citizens are equal in the eye of the law." The Abbe de la Mennais, one of the most powerful minds in Europe, though a Deist, speaks of the Author of Christianity, as the *Great Republican* of his age. The late DeWitt Clinton, of New

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York, in a public address, once uttered the following words: "Christianity in its essence, its doctrines, and its forms is, strictly speaking, republican. It inculcates the natural equality of mankind; and it points to our common origin, and our end, to our nativity and our graves, and to our immortal destinies beyond the grave as illustrations of this impressive truth." The late President Pierce has said: "Although in our political institutions there is no union of Church and State, yet the religion of our divine Saviour is not the less an all-pervading principle of the laws, the sentiments, the moral and social existence of the people of the United States. The Christian religion animates our nationality; it is the true spirit of good government; it is the characteristic and peculiar quality of modern civilization; it is the noble bond of connection, which, by community of religious connections, attaches together, and elevates into relative superiority of intelligence and power, the sovereign States of Europe and America. And whenever Christianity diffuses itself among all the nations of the earth, it goes to be the herald of civilization, as well as to point out the way of everlasting life." Quotations of a similar import might be indefinitely extended.

For myself I believe that the principles and practice of revealed religion are indispensably necessary to perpetuate the existence, peace, welfare, happiness, and temporal prosperity of any nation. In all printed works on political science, either of olden or later date, the position is assumed, that a perfectly good government faithfully administered, furnishes ample means for preserving, and promoting the welfare of communities, states, and empires. In my humble judgment, this sentiment is an error, which has a most inauspicious bearing on the social interests of mankind. Let us reflect, that a civil government, under the most favorable circumstances, is

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nothing but a system of external means or instrumentalities, designed to prevent and suppress the commission of actions, which in the view of said government are detrimental to the public good. Reflect, again, that mental philosophers and divines, of every name, agree in admitting, that the outward conduct of men is invariably the consequence or effect of their leading, predominant desires and passions. As by an inevitable necessity water drowns, fire burns, cold freezes, poison kills, and rivers descend, so a man's external life is unavoidably determined by the strongest thoughts and feelings of his soul. It is impossible, therefore, to control the social conduct of men, except by means which have power to reach and determine the dictates of their hearts or predominant affections. Legislators are just as unable to direct the wild, boisterous passions of the human soul as they are to govern Arcturus, Orion, or Pleiades. A perfect system of civil law could no more suppress immoral actions, than it could extinguish a volcano, or keep the tides from flowing and ebbing. Solemn, melancholy fact!

In addition, there is a multitude of actions that operate injuriously, which no civil government can so much as attempt to prohibit and suppress. For example, ingratitude to parents, cruelty to children, intemperance, innumerable forms of fraud, oppression, falsehood, and injustice, in defiance of the restraining power of law, may become so prevalent and aggravated in a community, as to cause its utter remediless destruction.

Once more, civil government must ever be unable to detect and punish, a large proportion of those offences which it presumes to define, and condemn. Why? Because it is not possessed of the attributes of omnipresence, and omniscience. Legislative enactment can exercise no protection over our rights, persons, and property, any further than its

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executive officers have power to distinguish the guilty from the innocent, by legal and conclusive evidence. This power is much more circumscribed than at first sight it may seem to be. It is not probable that under the respective governments of the United States for instance, more than one offence out of a thousand is found out, and dealt with according to the requirements of civil and criminal law.

But let us proceed a step further. Supposing that every civil offence in any community were detected, and rigidly punished; even then, the utmost that mere law could do, with all its terrors and penalties, would be to erect a temporary, feeble barrier to the egress or commission of crime, in some particular form or way; or in other words, by law you may change the mode or fashion of sin, but cannot destroy the principle itself. Imagine every form of that vice called theft in our statute book, now existing in the United States, to be completely destroyed by improvements, or an increased efficiency in our municipal regulations; yet, the depraved desire remaining unextinguished in the bosoms of the people, would invent some new form of commission, not contemplated by the present provisions of our laws. The waters of a river will descend in spite of all the obstructions which may be put in their way; so the dominant passions of the human heart will break out into action, in defiance of the prohibitions of human governments.

Finally, civil law, as an abstract, independent agent, unaccompanied by any concurring influences, tends surely to increase the identical evils it was intended to suppress. An English statesman of distinguished reputation, remarks, that in Great Britain, the laws for centuries past, have been constantly changing, in order to meet the ceaseless modifications of crime. But, he adds, "*In proportion as law*

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has abounded, crime has much more abounded." So it has been in all lands and ages. Just in proportion to the refinement and multiplication of law, have been the refinement and multiplication of transgression. Vice is a proteus; it can change itself into any form that may be requisite to meet the ever-varying aspect of external circumstances.

In the seventh chapter of Romans, similar sentiments are recorded by the pen of inspiration. It is there affirmed that no system of mere law, however perfected, is able to accomplish the salvation of a community. It is a proverb that children indulge an unaccountable propensity to indulge in prohibited actions and amusements. To attempt to enforce upon young persons the observance of the Sabbath by pains and penalties, generally ends in inspiring them with a hatred of this blessed day, and all the collateral ordinances of the Christian system. It is almost universally admitted, that the Maine Liquor Laws, which have been passed of late years, with so much boasting expectation and promise, have signally failed. Intemperance is more rife, and fearful to-day in our land, than it ever was before. Madam Sevigne, a celebrated French lady, on a certain occasion, after drinking when very thirsty a glass of cool water, said, "How delightful would this indulgence be, if it were only unlawful." Passing laws against alcoholic drinks creates an intense and unquenchable longing for them. Yet, how many in the plenitude of their wisdom, recommend legislative enactments to prevent the extension of Intemperance and Slavery!

The Saviour assures us that the whole of his religion is comprised in one great divine principle — the principle of love. Men are naturally inclined to do what is agreeable to their ruling affections. So long as they dislike religion, no terrors and no punishments can lead them to perform its external

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duties even, in a manner acceptable to God. It may be thought that if these views be correct, our social welfare rests, indeed, upon a very precarious footing. Terrible, to be sure, and hopeless would be our, condition, were there nothing to restrain men from the commission of crime, but the arm of civil government. This agent, solitary — by itself — would not be able to maintain the peace and order of any community a single month; but as it exists in our world, it is always blended with numerous other influences, which give it an efficiency for good. The effect of pure, unmixed law, as already remarked, tends only to corrupt man and awaken illicit desires.

In the department of physical nature there are elements, which alone and unmingled, exert a deleterious effect upon the human system; but when united with other substances they become pleasant and salubrious. It is well known that the atmosphere is composed of two ingredients, one of which we cannot inhale by itself, without being destroyed; but mixed with another body, it forms a compound which is the pabulum of life for the whole animal and vegetable creation. So government, which by itself is a stern, harsh principle, blended with the family influence, the church, the school, the press, the gentle, soft, mild and refining spirit that never entirely abandons humanity however depressed, contributes an important quota towards accomplishing the peace, order, and improvement of society.

Some philosophers think that civilization, without the Bible, is sufficient to secure and build up the happiness of a nation. We often hear the sentiment expressed that it is unwise to attempt to Christianize the heathen nations, before they become civilized, as if civilization of itself were, by necessity, a moralizing process. Every one admits the superiority in many respects, of cultivated above barbar-

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ous communities. Civilization, if I may be allowed the figure, builds our houses, provides our tables, and wardrobes, makes our streets, roads, bridges, and vessels, and throws around us, in their innumerable forms, the material comforts, luxuries and accommodations of life. It removes from the exterior of man, those rude, vulgar, disgusting habits and manners that characterize savages. But the same remarks which were made concerning the peculiar and exclusive influence of government, are also applicable to the agent of which we are now speaking. It cannot reach and control those passions of the heart, whence all human conduct emanates. Suppose every man in a particular community to be a perfect gentleman in outward deportment, and every woman completely refined in external appearance, and manners. Suppose that we all lived in palaces of splendor, with the resources of a boundless wealth flowing around us, having nothing to do but spend our time amid smiles and gaiety, the forms of elegance and fashion, the charms of music, letters, and voluptuousness. Even then, it is plain that our hearts might be given up to the unrestrained gratification of pernicious appetites and passions. In the sight of God, we might be corrupt and unprincipled, selfish and hard-hearted, and at the same time display to the eyes of man, an outside smooth as a marble statue wrought into the expressions and harmonies of the human form divine.

All admit that the laws of the highest civilization may be directly antagonistic to the requirements of a lofty and unbending rectitude. They in reality tolerate all actions which bear the stamp of fashion — of the best and most established usage. Fashion erects her altar, and its votaries fall down before it, with a blind, implicit, and unscrupulous homage. They would rather break every command of the decalogue than be regarded as vulgar, coarse, inele-

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gant — the stupid violators of the laws of etiquette. Such persons are as really degraded below every just standard of morality, as the open avowed sensualist and profligate. And if they are not sensualists and profligates in truth, it is simply because licentiousness does not happen to be the reigning folly of the place where they live. But abstract arguments are not needed to settle this matter.

Let me present one item of instruction touching this theme, derived from the pages of authentic history. It is well known, that Athens, in the time of Pericles, had reached the acme of civilization. In this particular she has never been surpassed by any nation before or since. There the genius of beauty, descending fresh from heaven, imparted to her enthusiastic admirers, the tastes and habits of indescribable refinement. There political freedom was born, and hurled defiance, even when in the morning of life, at the banded hordes of Oriental despotism. There the arts and graces danced around man to protect him from the cold storms of barbarism — filled his house with comforts, bordered his path with roses, bound his brows with laurel wreaths, bade the statue to breathe and the canvass glow with life, built the majestic temple, and erected the mausoleum to throw over his final sleep the veil of architectural loveliness. There poets, orators, and scholars displayed powers of intellect and fancy which have never been excelled, and will captivate the souls of men till time shall be no more. Now every reading child has learned, that not long after reaching this culminating point, the Athenian State began to decline, and soon sank down, crushed by moral corruptions to be submerged in the abyss of irreparable ruin. Civilization could not save her; and now nothing but desolateness is seen along those ever memorable shores, once thronged with the most gay, enlightened and polished inhabitants of the ancient world.

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Others have advocated the theory, that the removal of ignorance — the universal diffusion and advancement of knowledge are all that is necessary to perpetuate the peace and welfare of nations. Everybody is sensible that knowledge is "power of the most efficient and comprehensive kind," and that it can multiply to an indefinite extent the means of temporal prosperity. Witness the railroads, telegraphs, and other inventions which reflect so much glory on our day. But no amount or variety of learning can renovate and purify the heart — the prolific fountain of all virtues and vices. Mankind have certain necessary wants, which must be supplied, in order to secure their happiness this side the grave. They may be classified in the following manner: First, suitable provisions are requisite for their physical sustenance. Secondly, they need knowledge to expand and gratify the intellect. Truth is to the soul, what food is to the body. Thirdly, they require a good civil government. Fourthly, they cannot get along well here without the ennobling elements of a sound, religious faith. This last mentioned blessing can be derived only from the Bible.

Let us see what there is in the Bible which enables it to produce such comprehensive and magnified results. In what manner, or by what influences has the Good Book power to supply what always has been, and is still a grand desideratum with all legislators, statesmen, divines, and philanthropists, the suppression of social evils by the annihilation of their causes? On this question I will not take the trouble to offer the speculations of uninspired philosophy, but simply state the oft repeated declarations of the Son of God in regard to this subject. By him we are taught that all the practical laws of the Bible are comprised in two leading, prominent affections. First — a heart beating in unison with

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that of our heavenly Father — a heart that finds its supreme happiness in communing with him — that is enriched in some humble degree with his own mental and moral splendors — a heart on which the infinite Fountain of all good constantly pours the life-giving influences of his love and presence, as the kindly zephyrs breathe upon and animate the opening buds, blossoms, and beauties of the vernal season — a heart enamored of all that is true, good, beautiful and great. Such a heart the Saviour teaches us is the foundation of all genuine moral excellence, and the source of all the highest blessings enjoyed by spirits on earth or in heaven. In the next place, inseparably connected with the above mentioned sentiments towards the Creator, the Christian has a heart beating in unison with his fellowmen, and that prompts him on all occasions to love a neighbor as himself.

The Gospel finds the natural man wholly absorbed in selfish and sinful pursuits: his own personal interest is the object of every movement, and the motive of every action. Jesus puts forth his regenerating hand, and immediately the scales fall from his eyes; he is lifted out of the horrible pit and miry clay of an obdurate, degrading selfishness; he is placed on a higher plane of being; breathes a more salubrious atmosphere; treads the sweet, verdant fields of an heavenly landscape; looks out upon the enrapturing, boundless vistas of a godlike and immortal philanthropy. No longer making his insignificant self the undivided object of his care, efforts and solicitude, he soon learns to regard the whole community of which he is a member with the pure, intense, divine feelings of fraternal attachment. He deeply realizes that his own interest and welfare are identified with the interests, welfare and happiness of his neighbors — that they must fall or rise together. He, therefore, becomes willing to make

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great sacrifices, if necessary, to promote the good of those around him, and feels more than compensated for these contributions to the public weal, by the refluent tide of augmented happiness which flows back upon his own soul in thirty, sixty, or an hundred-fold increase.

> " Self-love forsakes the path it first pursued,
> And finds the private in the public good.
> Self-love thus pushed to social, to divine,
> Gives thee to make thy neighbor's blessing thine.
> Is this too little for thy boundless heart?
> Extend it, let thy enemies have part;
> Grasp the whole world of reason, life and sense,
> In one close system of benevolence;
> Happier as kinder, in whate'er degree,
> And height of bliss, but height of charity."

That process termed by sectarians *regeneration, the new birth, conversion, repentance, renewal to holiness, &c.*, is nothing more than a transition from a state of habitual selfishness to that of disinterested benevolence; from dark, sullen, violent, cruel, unscrupulous passions, to mildness, meekness, and submission; from indifference, insensibility, or aversion to God, to the profoundest sentiments of reverence, worship and trust; from mean, sensual, earthly habits to the exercises and aspirations of a spiritual, heaven-derived, and deathless nature. And there is a time in the life of every devoted Christian, when this change takes place; which is brought about only by the conjoined influence of the Bible, and the Holy Spirit. This last named agent proffers effectual aid to the weakness of human endeavor, in the great enterprise of working out our salvation.

Repeatedly does the Son of God affirm, that the essence of true religion is the spirit of love. Now, it is self-evident, that if this affection were the reigning, predominant motive in any community, its inhabitants regarding each other with only pure, gen-

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erous, expanded sympathies, would be incapable of hatred, distrust, envy and uncharitableness. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." For there is no commandment of Scripture, which is not briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*" Gospel love is mild, meek, gentle, merciful, of a forbearing and forgiving temper, inciting to no actions but those which are just, useful, and beneficent. It is plain then, that if love to God, and love to men controlled every individual, every family, school, church, legislature — every class and description of persons in society — then all that is wrong and licentious in morals, all that is unjust, tyrannical, or oppressive either in private life, or in governmental plans, policies and regulations, would soon flee away from the sight and hearing of a world's redeemed, emancipated and rejoicing millions.

Granting the premises, nobody can deny this conclusion. But will the time ever arrive when people in general will be actuated by the principles just mentioned. What evidence can be adduced that the Bible is adequate to the production of such a glorious result? There is no room here, for a full reply to this question. It is admitted that mankind are capable of being pious, and charitable in the sense above explained. It is known from ample and oft repeated experiments, that in communities where the Bible is maintained, taught and revered, there is a degree of order, peace, morality and refinement, never found among those by whom the Scriptures are derided, anathematized and abjured. Besides, Jesus Christ expressly teaches, that the principles of the Gospel will one day be brought to bear on all the complex and multifarious classes and interests of our race — reclaiming the wanderers from rectitude; softening all that are cruel; subduing the rebellious;

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enlightening the ignorant; expelling injustice, fraud, idleness and impurity from all human habitations; and infusing into every bosom the sublime disposition to do unto others, whatsoever they would that others should do unto them.

To my mind, reason and experience furnish arguments in support of the doctrine, that our race is constantly urged forward in the career of improvement, by laws as irresistible as those which create the flowers and foliage of each returning spring. Every human mind contains the germ or element of an unlimited progression. The same remark is applicable to civilized societies of every description, however circumscribed or extended be the orbits in which they revolve. The pages of authentic history demonstrate the general advancement of mankind in sound philosophy, knowledge of the useful arts, and the various attainments of social, moral, and spiritual excellence. Let the work of reform in government be carried on with all possible skill and diligence. Let education, schools, and literature do their utmost. They all have their appropriate sphere, and are instruments of usefulness which God himself has ordained. But something more than all these combined, is absolutely necessary to perpetuate and bless the nations — something that is forever beyond the reach of their mightiest and best directed energies. This is the subordination of the human heart with all its dark, wild, wayward, desperate, ungoverned passions to the spirit and laws of Christian philanthropy. A nation may possess boundless resources of physical prosperity, yet, estranged from the guiding, guardian genius of revealed religion, as above explained, it will become only a more shining mark for the shafts of destruction, like a gallant ship, the pride and glory of some princely merchant, launched upon the stormy main, and richly freighted, but without compass, rudder,

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pilot, star in the sky, or lighthouse on the coast to guide her way through perilous and unknown waters.

If the Bible is indispensable to national existence and prosperity, no words can exaggerate its worth and importance. To me it seems that one of the greatest errors of the age in which we live, is a disposition to disparage and undervalue the Sacred Writings. We see its gloomy manifestations in all classes. To say nothing about the philosophers and learned men in general, Christian divines do not. in many cases, appear to think highly enough of inspired truth. Theologians have sometimes thrust the Bible one side, and substituted in its room, works and formularies invented by frail and fallible instructors. Cannot the infinite intelligence compose a better book on religion than any uninspired man, or body of men? The scholar in his researches through heaven and earth, fancies that he has made acquirements which cast a dim eclipse upon the lights of revelation. And, even, some teachers of religion represent the discoveries of Scripture as having become obselete, antiquated and useless. As if it were possible for the world to outgrow the revelations of Moses and Jesus. The Sacred Volume can no more become obsolete, as to its spirit, than could the sun, moon, and stars; the principle of gravitation, or the throne of the Supreme Father. The last chapter of the Bible was composed nearly eighteen hundred years ago. Since that time what efforts have been made to annihilate the book? The whole power of man has often been engaged in attempts to consummate this work of ruin. By similar zeal, energy, skill, and perseverance, any other book extant might have been struck out of existence. How many thousands of the noblest spirits have laid down their lives in the enterprise of honoring and diffusing the Scriptures? Where are the

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material professions and glories of earth, which were the objects of man's idolatrous attachment when Rome, or Greece was in its zenith. "Like a baseless pageant," they have faded away.

But the Bible still lives. To-day it looks forth upon the world, with the same divine, immortal strength and beauty, which it had at first. From that glorious orb, heavenly splendors constantly beam upon our ignorant and unhappy race. The wisest and brightest of mankind rejoice to consecrate their highest powers to the service of revealed religion. The preservation of the Scriptures is one of the most remarkable and interesting facts in the circumference of human knowledge. They are many centuries older than Homer's Iliad. One army of opponents after another have tried their best to expunge them from the annals of literature. Kings, empires, kingdoms, hierarchies, learning, with eloquence, wealth and fashion, through a long succession of ages, have put forth all their combined efforts to accomplish their ruin. But in spite of persecution, bars, bolts, fetters, torture and death, shame and hatred, the Bible with unseen, silent, all-subduing energies, has been constantly swaying the human mind, and building therein a spiritual dominion, which will last long as the universe itself. Yes, in defiance of the numerous and powerful enemies that have plotted its destruction, the Good Book remains immovable, like some majestic promontory, whose base, through an unknown, incalculable duration, has breasted the utmost fury of boisterous waves and tempestuous storms.

If, then, we are actuated by an enlightened regard to the welfare of ourselves and families; if we cherish the noble pulsations of patriotic attachment to our glorious republic; if prompted by Christian philanthrophy, we long to see the burden of a world's wretchedness rolled off into the gulf of ob-

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livion — we shall do all in our power to give a wider diffusion, and greater efficiency to the principles of the inspired volume. For this object it will be our greatest pleasure to live, toil, suffer, and die, if need be. The most dangerous, and hurtful men in society, whatever may be their motives, are those who are employing all their genius, together with the resources of a vast and various erudition to lower, traduce, and disparage the holy Scriptures in the public estimation. Many wise men say that political freedom will be enough of itself to build up and perpetuate the national glory of this Union. But, is there no ground for indulging gloomy apprehensions with regard to our ultimate fates and fortunes? To be sure, we shall soon be filled with a crowded population, and all the physical advantages required to make a nation great and illustrious in a temporal point of view; but, notwithstanding, if devoid of the genius of true religion, a deadening oppression — a moral incubus will settle upon the heart of this mighty republic; quenching forever its light, life, hope, heroism and happiness. Yes, no matter how high we may soar as to material wealth, luxury and accommodations, without the vitalizing power of Christianity we shall soon expire, and lie down to sleep the sleep of death in the magnificent mausoleum of departed States, Empires and Republics.

An heathen poet has said, "No truly good man can be destroyed." This doctrine is inculcated in our Saviour's sermon on the Mount. In the conclusion of this discourse he says to his hearers, "Though storms of external distress may sweep over you, though you may suffer the wreck of all terrestrial possessions; though you may be hated and persecuted by the world, yet, possessed of true religion nothing will hurt you. The rains may descend, and the floods may come, and the winds blow and beat

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upon your house, but it will not fall, because it is founded upon a rock." As to individuals, there is only one real calamity to which they are exposed — that is a mind impoverished, mean, and desolate — a mind filled with the shame, unrest and anguish, inseparable from the indulgence of guilty, debasing, and unhallowed passions. He whose heart is warmed and replenished by the love of God, is of necessity happy — happy in want — happy in a cabin or a dungeon — happy amidst the heaviest adversities which can possibly cast their dark shadows upon the landscape of human life. The same laws, precisely, are applicable to communities. Sin unrestrained is just as certain to destroy a nation, as an individual. To secure a perpetuity of a nation, every child born therein must enjoy the inestimable benefits of a complete, thorough education. It must be delivered from abject, down-trodden, starving, hopeless, and desperate paupers. All its laws must be just, impartial and beneficent in their ends, policies, and regulations. It must be kept free from the indescribable evils of fraud, falsehood, excessive selfishness, libertinism, gambling, intemperance, and all kindred vices and immoralities. Nothing but the spirit of the Bible seated in the heart of a nation, sending spiritual life through all its veins and arteries, actuating, controlling, and subordinating the majority; rectifying whatever is wrong, and healing whatever is diseased in the public mind, conduct, and character, can impart to it everlasting union, strength and harmony, and bind all its component parts together by the indissoluble ties of love, sympathy and benevolence. The Bible, if these things are so, is just as necessary to keep a nation alive, as are food, sleep, and air to preserve the life of our bodies.

When the Hon. Edward Everett was President of Harvard University, it was proposed to exempt from the regular course of studies prescribed in that col-

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lege, the Greek and Latin classics; leaving it optional with the students to read them or not. "No," said Mr. Everett, "good literature is one of the most useful instruments that can be employed in the formation of a young man's intellectual taste and character. By *good literature*, I mean the very best thoughts on any interesting subject, expressed in the most beautiful, impressive and appropriate words. Such a literature we have in the immortal productions just referred to. To youth it is of incalculable advantage to be early initiated into the beauties and wonders of those ancient writings. We must never allow them to lose their present position in our systems of academical training. We shall sustain an immense loss by giving them up." The reasoning of this distinguished scholar is strictly applicable to the inspired books of Scripture. The literature of Job, the Psalms, and Isaiah are as much superior to Homer and Virgil, as heaven is higher than earth. Their loss would be an irreparable calamity. Destroy them and you would take out of our hands the sublimest compositions the world has ever seen, or that ever will be read this side the grave.

"If the Bible be of human origin, it must certainly be regarded as the most wonderful effort of created intelligence. That there should be so perfect a book in so early a state of the world; that no volume, either ancient or modern, though written in the most advanced and cultivated condition of human society, can be compared with this primeval record originating in a compartively rude age, is to my own mind, a fact not easily accounted for on the principles of infidelity. The world is filled with the books that are the product of the mightiest sons of genius; but they are sterile and jejune, deformed and ungainly, in comparison with the riches of thought, the extent of research, the accuracy, grace and gran-

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deur which distinguish the Bible. If it were for nothing but their literary merit, therefore, the Scriptures claim the most earnest attention of the young. There is no standard by which the character of literary and scientific men, may be so safely and successfully formed. The more he reads, the more I am confident an accomplished scholar will study the Bible. There are no finer English scholars than the men educated north of the Tweed. And there are none who, from childhood are so well acquainted with the Scriptures. It has been said that the characteristic *wit* of Scotchmen is attributable to their early and constant familiarity with the Proverbs of Solomon. No well informed man, no well educated family is ignorant of the Bible. We can better afford to part with every other book from our family libraries, our schools and colleges, than this finished production of supernatural genius!" (Dr. Spring.)

The late Daniel Webster the very winter before his death, when entertaining a small select party of friends at his own table, in the city of Washington, took the opportunity to expatiate at some length, with respect to his peculiar views concerning the Bible. The Sacred Volume was a favorite theme of remark with this extraordinary man. I once heard the late Dr. Ephraim Peabody, of Kings Chapel, Boston, say that Mr. W., possessed a more profound and critical knowledge of St. Paul's Epistles, than any divine in the whole circle of his acquaintance. And this sort of knowledge contributed much, no doubt, towards those masterly strains of eloquence which will immortalize his name. I rejoice that he expired with the words of Christian prayer on his lips. "Heavenly Father, forgive my sins and receive me to thyself, in that glory where the Son of God lives and reigns forever." Some of his enemies have said this was "acting merely." Impossible! "Death is an honest hour, and faithful to its trust."

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No man ever did, no man ever could play the hypocrite in this solemn crisis. How delightful to believe that his prayer was answered; that "he still lives!" How incredible the supposition that such a mind as he had at the period of his departure — enriched to an unsurpassed degree by the various elements of science and learning; an infinite storehouse of ideas, shedding such a brilliant light not only throughout the horizon of America, but also, that of all civilized lands — is now no more, cold, lifeless, senseless, thoughtless, passionless — and destined to remain forever!

"Who can think that such a one was but the pilgrim of a day,
Spouse of the worm, and brother of the clay,
Frail as the leaf in autumn's yellow bower,
Dust in the wind, or dew upon the flower;
A friendless slave, a child without a sire,
Whose mortal life and momentary fire,
Lit to the grave his chance created form,
As ocean wrecks illuminate the storm."

But I am wandering. The name of Mr. Webster was introduced, to quote his authority on the subject of biblical literature, by referring to his conversation at the dinner table above mentioned, as it was related to me by a distinguished gentleman of New Orleans, who was one of his guests on that occasion. Mr. Webster said that he had never read a composition of any age or dialect, so simple, grand and impressive, as the last chapter of Habakkuk. To illustrate the superiority of its literature merely, he narrated the following anecdote: A French skeptic, and a finished scholar, when atheism was all the fashion in Paris, happened one morning as he was rummaging a library, to come across a copy of the Old Testament prophecies in his vernacular tongue. He had never seen the book before; had never read a syllable of it. In utter ignorance of the true character and history of the volume, opening it at ran-

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dom, his eyes by chance first lit upon this identical portion of Scripture — Habakkuk, 3d chapter. He perused the second and third verses. They appeared to his imagination most striking and magnificent. As he went on his admiration rose to the highest pitch, till he was completely transported. Shutting up the book without the remotest idea of its real origin, he hastened away to announce the discovery to some of his companions. "I have found to-day," said he, "the most eloquent and remarkable production which I have ever seen." "Indeed" inquired they, "who is the author?" He replied, "it is one Monsieur Habakkuk;" supposing him to have been a French writer. "My taste" continued Mr. W., "is precisely coincident with that of this skeptical philosopher. And, my friends, if we could peruse this page of Sacred Writ, for the first time, this very hour, we should be equally smitten with its simple, divine, and superlative grandeur."

The great statesman proceeded to say further, "I should like to have a picture of the prophet drawn by a master hand, representing him as standing in the midst of the appalling desolations which he saw in vision; in a wide desert, once blooming with vegetable glories, but now stripped of every verdant and living beauty; and kneeling down at the foot of a tree leafless and bare, its trunk and branches shattered by the thunderbolts of heaven, as he is offering up to God the touching ejaculation of the following text: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom; neither shall fruit be in the vine; though the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields yield no meat; though the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herds in the stall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation."

Our powers of perceiving and relishing the beautiful in some particular writings, are often blunted and im-

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paired by familiarity. An object which has no other merit than that of being new, by this quality alone makes an agreeable impression on the mind. Objects and ideas with which we have been long intimate, though their intrinsic charms are great and numerous, may almost cease to interest us, and scarcely receive our attention. The fine variation of colors shown by the sky, at the rising and setting of the sun, do not appear as striking and attractive to most persons as the pyrotechnic exhibitions of some gala night on a public square. Mankind in general almost need a new sense to enable them to realize the beauty and magnificence of the outward world. So the Sacred Writings though so noble, strike multitudes as trite and common-place. Things so familiar fail to arrest their attention. Few ministers possess sufficient genius to infuse that freshnesa and vividness into their descriptions of divine truth, which are requisite to bring out its peculiar features, to point men to its higher beauties, and inspire them with a just admiration for its surpassing harmonies and magnificence.

Religious worship is an inherent, essential, universal want of our nature. Hence in all ages and lands, whether civilized or barbarous, mankind have turned their souls towards some divinity or other; offered worship at its shrine, and invoked its aid and protection in the trials of life and in the agonies of death. Now, it is an unbending, eternal law, that men must resemble, to a certain extent at least, the object of their supreme adoration. If this be great and exalted, the worship thereof will tend to expand, refine and ennoble their character and conduct. If it be low, mean, and base, its worshippers will be conformed to the same degraded standard. No man can be better than the God whom he venerates, honors, and trusts in. Consequently the human heart requires a God worthy of the whole treasure of its

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love; "to whom we may consecrate our whole existence; in approaching whom, we enter an atmosphere of purity and brightness; in sympathizing with whom we cherish only noble sentiments, in devoting ourselves to whom we espouse great and enduring interests, in whose character we find the spring of an ever enlarging philanthrophy, and by attachment to whom, all our other attachments are hallowed, protected and supplied with tender and sublime consolations under bereavement and blighted hope. Such a being is the God of the Bible." (Channing.)

Yes, the Bible is the only book that furnishes us with a sublime object, and rational mode of religious worship. All nations unpossessed of this guide, however cultivated as to arts and sciences, have been idolaters. The greatest curse that man has ever endured is idolatry. What has delivered us from this curse? All good and competent judges concur in answering, the Bible has done it. And it was given to the world for this express purpose. Before the superlative grandeur of the infinite One as therein portrayed, the idols of Paganism were compelled "to hide their diminished heads," and take refuge in their primeval darkness. Those simple, earnest, impassionate prayers, which David uttered three thousand years ago, when hunted through the forests of Palestine by bitter persecutors; those sweet, celestial hymns that touch a chord in every soul, and breathe forth his unfaltering trust in Heaven, when forced with his few followers to flee to the rocks and caverns of the mountains; those sublime, rapturous odes and anthems which he subsequently composed, to be chanted in the tabernacle service on Mount Zion, are the very prayers, odes, hymns and anthems which are used to-day in every congregation throughout Christendom, from St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome, down to

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the humblest dissenting chapel. These fixed, eternal, stereotyped liturgies of praise, gratitude, penitence, trust, hope and joy have been translated into all the languages of the civilized world. Their music resounds from land to land, and encompasses the globe.

Its heavenly strains enchant our hearts, make beauteous and divine the life within us, adorn our homes, support, soothe, gladden and sanctify our bosoms in the hour of affliction and bereavement; deliver us from the pain and wretchedness, the sorrow and solitude, the gloom and melancholy, the ennui, weariness and dissatisfaction of a merely worldly life, and give us foretastes and glimpses of that serener, brighter, happier world, to which we shall be introduced when the cares, disquietudes, conflicts and storms of mortality can assail us no more. I hesitate not to say that a single psalm, the nineteenth for example, or thirty-seventh, or seventy-third, or the one hundred and third, (and many others might be mentioned,) shed more light and glory on the world, than all the books extant, which treat of cities and empires that have passed away — that tell us of the crumbling pyramids, tombs, temples, arches, obelisks, paphyri, hieroglyphics, and manuscripts of Egyptian, Assyrian, Chinese, Grecian and Roman antiquities combined. The latter might be annihilated completely, and we should scarcely feel the loss. But without the former how dark would the ages of time roll on! How soon should we be lost in a bottomless gulf of debasement and barbarity! The Roman Catholic or Episcopalian prayer book contains what is more important to the temporal happiness even of mankind, than all other literature ancient or modern, because it is chiefly composed of selections and abridgements from the Holy Scriptures.

But the Bible has still higher claims. It is the

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record of a revelation from God to man. I mean that in this book are words which were uttered by the authority of our heavenly Father, and under a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit. God has been pleased to make himself known in Nature and Providence. Also he has communicated truth to us orally, in human language — in literature. The word inspiration is used in a great variety of senses. Hardly any word in our dialect has a more vague and undetermined signification. It is applied to music, painting, sculpture, romance, poetry, sermons, orations, conversation, the performances on the stage of a theatre, &c. I accept with pleasure this broad and comprehensive import of the term. Every honest, faithful mind enjoys a certain kind of inspiration, or communion with God. Every composition that displays superior genius, extraordinary power of intellect in any department of knowledge, was dictated by a divine spirit, which co-operated in a greater or less degree, with its author. In God we live, and his life constantly penetrates our souls. He acts or exerts an influence in everything which is true, good, and beautiful. We behold God in every object that we lawfully admire and love. Whatever is fair and harmonious in the world without; whatever is dear and delightful in the character and excellence of our fellow-beings; if heaven from its majestic heights, if earth from its innumerable beauties, sends one pure, sweet, sublime thought or feeling into our minds — that is a form of inspiration breathing upon us from the ever-present, ever-living, all-beautiful, and all-glorious Creator. The whole outward universe of splendor and beauty — the fertile valley, the rich plain, the verdant meadow, hills, and mountains, flowers, fragrance, forests, springs, rivers, lakes, seas, continents, &c., — are a revelation of God. They were given to nourish and kindle in our souls, a moral effulgence, and

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beauty, which are but the images of a Father's uncreated, unbounded grandeur and loveliness.

The human mind itself is a Bible — "elder Scripture writ by God's own hand," proclaiming in clear, unmistakable accents the divine perfections, the laws of duty, and the immortality of the soul. I accept all these intuitions, without which the words of Scripture would be unintelligible. The doctrine of an endless existence after death is inscribed on the heart by the finger of the Almighty. Without the hope of such a destiny, the most capacious and dignified powers of our nature would tend to make us dissatisfied and unhappy. We are apt to suppose that persons of superior genius and attainments in learning, must, of course, possess an extraordinary share of enjoyment. Although it be admitted that knowledge, abstractly considered, is a source of happiness, yet all experience shows that no intellectual culture, unaccompanied with those religious hopes which lay hold on eternity, is able to gratify to any considerable extent, the inherent wants and desires of the human mind. Rosseau, Byron, Burns, and many others might be cited as instances of the truth of this observation. They became more and more wretched as they rose in learning and mental power. Suppose any living scholar, this very day, to become enriched with a stock of science and literature sufficient to produce a work equal to Newton's Principia, Homer's Iliad, or Shakspeare's plays — at the end of a single week, this mighty range of thought and acquisitions, would seem to him but as ordinary, familiar, common-place attainments — the mere rudiments which school boys study. New, distant, unexplored fields of wonder would open to his view, forcing upon him the same sensations of ignorance which he feels at the present hour; and so, such is the organization of our minds, we should be constantly miserable without the pros-

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pect of everlasting advancement in knowledge and wisdom. This fact is a sublime revelation. It renders certain the doctrine that our faculties will go on unfolding and ripening forever; that our mental excursions will constantly grow more wide and grand; our acquirements become more extended and refulgent, and that, hence, we must ascend from one height to another, without reaching the acme — the final summit of moral and intellectual attainments.

The same kind of illustration is applicable to the highest power which we possess — that of being and doing good. Suppose that this very hour, in an instant, we were emancipated completely from every sin, moral stain, and imperfection. Suppose that we were now exalted to the sublime standard of angels before the throne. And imagine again, that we were destined to stop there — to advance no further, but become absolutely stationary, and look out henceforward and forever upon the same undiversified scene of truth and beauty. Now, I ask, could we be happy in such a fixed, unvaried state of being, although entirely exempted from the blight and calamities of sin? I answer, no! Our very existence would become a grevious, intolerable burden. For such is the nature of a good mind, that, always looking away beyond present attainments, it will feel confined, imprisoned, wretched, unless it can send out its thoughts in anticipation of a purer, loftier, nobler standard of excellence, which is yet to be realized, at some future period of an ever-unfolding destiny. What a proof is thus afforded, that our minds not subject like the body to a limited growth, were created for infinitude — an endless progress, endless advancement?

Yes, a nature like ours unsupported, uncheered by a religious hope, would necessarily render us incapable of full, complete enjoyment. This fact again

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is another revelation. It corroborates the teachings of Jesus. It harmonizes with his assertion that beyond the grave there is a land of spirits — a land where the evils of time will exist only in the memory — where instead of trials, there will be only triumphs; instead of darkness, only light; instead of pain, only pleasure; instead of the bitter tears of bereavement and sorrow, the beamings of an unmingled, ever-increasing joy in the eternal kingdom of our Father. It may seem to some an unwarranted, extravagant assertion to say, that the powers of knowledge and virtue, without the hope of future development, would be an evil — an unmixed evil — an evil more severe and terrible than words can express, yet to my mind, it is a self-evident proposition.

I agree also with the Rationalists that the history of mankind is a revelation of God. When we read the records of past events whether pertaining to larger or smaller communities, we see that what to a superficial observer may seem to be merely an assemblage of confused, insulated, unassorted phenomena, is in reality a perfect drama, illustrating the wisdom, power, and goodness of that Great Being, whose pleasure called the moral universe into existence, and momently sustains it in order, beauty, and harmony. The catastrophe of this sublime drama which history presents, is the perfection of our common humanity, and its final exaltation to eternal glory beyond these scenes of earth and time. Now this natural revelation is the basis of inspired truth. Without it the Bible would be an unintelligible, useless book.

But I maintain in addition to all this, the old fashioned, (and in some circles) obsolete idea, that the writers of the Sacred Volume enjoyed a peculiar gift of inspiration, above and beyond that which is generally bestowed on good and great men in their

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literary efforts. Let me develop my meaning. Suppose that a clergyman in his pulpit at the close of a sermon, should inform his hearers that the words which had just fallen from his lips, were of divine authority; because in uttering them he had been enabled by an unseen, supernatural power from God to set forth the truth free from essential error. Imagine further that to prove his statement, he were to perform extraordinary works, called miracles — such for example, as going through the wards of a hospital, and by a wish, instantaneously restoring their sick, wounded and disabled inmates to perfect health and soundness; or walking into a cemetery, and causing the graves to open, and the dead to come forth, and move again among the living. Under these circumstances, would not every one of his congregation, however skeptical by nature or habit, be fully convinced, that the aforesaid minister had been empowered by a supernatural influence to utter doctrines that came from God? The incomprehensibility of the fact would be no hindrance to its reception as true. Now, the votaries of Christianity affirm, that an inspiration similar to this was enjoyed by our Saviour and his Apostles. Indeed, it is impossible to prove the reality of an alleged inspiration except by miraculous works of knowledge or power.

It is, indeed, a fact that all the priesthoods in the world claim to be inspired. The Mormons have a book, which they affirm came from God; the same is true of the Mahometans, Chinese, Hindoos, Persians, &c. Such pretensions from whatever source they emanate, do not deserve credence, unless they rest upon convincing and conclusive arguments. The alleged inspiration of every book that I know of, except the Bible, is not sustained by what logicians call sound reasoning. "We contend that a great variety of universally acknowledged facts be-

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longing to the Christian religion — such as the character of its founder, its peculiar principles, the style and character of its records, its remarkable progress; the condition, circumstances, and sufferings of its earliest propagators; the reception of it from the beginning, on the ground of miraculous attestation; the prophecies which it fulfilled and which it contains; its influence on civilized society and numerous other facts connected with it, are utterly inexplicable by the powers and principles of human nature under the circumstances in which it wasplaced at the time of Christ's birth. Every effect must have an adequate cause. The New Testament is an effect that can be accounted for only by the interposition of that Being, to whom its first preachers universally ascribe it, and with whose nature it perfectly agrees." I have brought forward this quotation to give an instance of what I mean by the assertion, that the inspiration of the Bible is established by legitimate arguments, which are not applicable to any other book in the world, that is regarded by its advocates as having had a supernatural origin.

The question is often asked, why was not this inspiration made irresistibly evident to all, like the sun in the heavens, so that no one could doubt, or deny its existence? In reply I would say, that then revealed religion would not have rested on faith, but mathematics. It is not pretended that the evidence appertaining to our religion, is strong enough to preclude the possibility of a doubt as to its genuineness, for then the reception of it, though universal, like the movements of a clock, or a steam engine would be constrained, mechanical and unavoidable. In the matter of faith, then, mankind would be mere automatons, or machines. There would be no nobleness in believing Scripture, if by an absolute necessity, we were obliged to receive it as divine, just as we are compelled to feel that the addition of four to

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four makes precisely eight. The ground which I take is simply this, that the evidence in behalf of divine inspiration, is sufficient to satisfy every sincere, honest, candid, impartial, unbiassed inquirer after truth. I am well aware that ignorance, fashion, the desolations of pride, passion, prejudice, self-interest, false learning, and debasing sensualities may so darken and paralyze the mind, as to render it blind, insensible to moral arguments, and to the most affecting displays of the Creator's power, wisdom, and glory. Let no one fancy that his want of faith in inspiration arises from deficiency of evidence. Let no one imagine that unbelief, in any case, is caused by superior genius and powers of reasoning. The skeptic is a wanderer in the land of shadows, chaos, disorder, and vain imaginings. It is by an honest, enlightened exercise of faith alone, that he can arise from the horrible pit and miry clay of materialism to tread the broad, healthy, verdant and shining regions of virtue, hope, peace, and true philosophy.

Once more, many say the Bible is not entitled to hold the place of a divine standard as to matters of religious faith and practice, because it contains numerous sentences which are universally acknowledged to be erroneous or untrue. The most formidable weapon ever wielded against the Word of God, was manufactured for the armory of the church by theologians themselves. This is the doctrine of *plenary* inspiration, as it is usually styled. The advocates of this theory take the ground, that there is not a single erroneous statement in the Sacred Volume, from the first verse of Genesis to the last of the Apocalypse. They contend that the whole, as it reads in our English version, is perfect, unmixed, infallible truth — as true in point of fact as the elements of Euclid, or the Multiplication Table.

Now, it is worthy of notice, that neither the

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writers of the Old or New Testament, claim to have composed under such an influence as the above hypothesis implies. In one place Paul says explicitly, "what I am now writing is uninspired — is not inculcated by Divine authority — I only express my private judgment touching this matter." There are many parts of Scripture which fall under the same category.

I will here present the views concerning this subject, adopted I believe by a large majority of Trinitarian divines, of every name throughout the Protestant world. Scripture may be divided into two parts — one of which is the work of man: a human production — the other is the work of God: a divine emanation. From heaven came all its moral, religious, spiritual instructions, and they must consequently be received as true. Point out a single doctrine or precept of the Bible that is false, or encourages unrighteousness, and we will never utter another syllable in favor of its inspiration. Take any single copy of the Good Book now extant, in any language, whether dead or living. Look on it. Analyze it. It is certain that uninspired men made the lids, the paper, the leaves, the types, the ink used in its fabrication, &c. They printed and bound the volume, and sent it abroad to fulfil its mission. Human energies created every copy of the Scriptures now in existence, as truly as they have constructed all the steam-engines, telegraphs, rail-roads, or chronometers now extant. And in accomplishing this work they were not kept from committing errors or mistakes by a supernatural, or miraculous influence which rendered it impossible for any imperfections, surreptitiously or otherwise, to enter into and impair their doings. "Whoever thinks a faultless piece of writing to see, thinks what never was, nor is, nor ever shall be." One Trinitarian critic of the highest reputation for fairness, acumen, and

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learning, asserts that there are, at least, fifty thousand mistakes in St. James' translation of the Scriptures, which is regarded as authoritative, wherever our vernacular tongue is used. Others make the number somewhat less, but all competent judges admit, that they amount to many thousands. Neither is it contended by any writer, that a copy of the Bible can now be found which was composed by inspired hands. According to the *theory*, the autographs only, or original manuscripts were inspired, and all these ages ago were expunged from the annals of literature. What, then, becomes of the doctrine of plenary inspiration? It is but a dream.

Some think that when God chose to give to mankind inspired ideas, it would have been in accordance with his mercy and goodness to have clothed them with infallible words. To this view, Archbishop Whately, of the Church of England has replied, "that the Deity could not have bestowed on us such a favor without violating his own laws, and destroying our accountability. God could no more create an infallible dialect for our use, than he could make a human body to be mortal, and immortal at the same time. Besides, such a literature to us would be perfectly unintelligible, and therefore useless. All the means of light, improvement, and happiness which fallible beings can use to advantage, must themselves be fallible."

But, it is thought by some, that these literary imperfections, as they may be called, are a dark cloud upon revelation, and render it altogether uncertain what part of the Bible is divine, as distinguished from that which is merely human. I think not. On all sides, among theologians, it is now admitted, that the various errors in the letter of Scripture, do not hide, pervert, or detract in the least from the import of the spiritualities which it contains. They do not overshadow, compromit, bring into doubt or dispute

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a single doctrine or precept essential to our present or everlasting welfare. They relate simply to the rules of grammar, dates, ancient geography, the customs, manners and idioms, and the state of the natural sciences, as they existed among the Oriental nations of remote ages, and cast no imputation or obscurity of any kind upon the moral and religious instructions communicated to the world by inspired teachers.

This is a wonderful fact. The most illiterate reader, if faithful and industrious, can ascertain what God says to him in Scripture with respect to any important duty, with as much clearness and precision, as a surveyor, with his chain and compasses, can point out the boundary line between your farm, and that of your neighbor. When a child comes across such phrases as these: "God is a sun, a rock, a fortress, a shield, or a husbandman, &c.," he understands their import as easily and thoroughly as the profoundest of philosophers. Indeed, the imperfect literature of the Bible is a great advantage to it in many ways. It does not overshadow, pervert, or corrupt its divine truths. The cloud that interposes between us and the setting sun, sends out a thousand beauties of color and form, that without such an interposition, mortals could never have perceived and admired. So the clouds that cast reflections upon the pages of sacred literature, soften down and modify the otherwise too glaring beams of the spiritual sun, and accommodate them to our feeble and defective powers of vision. "God never made his works for man to mend." No other form of the Bible that can be imagined, would be as well adapted as the one which we now have to all classes, learned and unlearned, high and low, rich and poor, young and old, civilized and barbarous — to the multifarious, endlessly diversified wants, condition, character and circumstances of mankind. It is alleged that the

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Hebrew literature of the Old Testament contains instances of romance, fable, impassioned poetry, legends, and stories, addressed not to human reason, but to our wildest fancies and imaginations. This is true. But it was unavoidable. Such is the case with all literature ancient and modern. Our Saviour in his discourses dealt largely in fables, romance, and stories, which every one knows have no foundation in historical reality. Yet, by each of them he inculcates some beautiful and interesting moral. The same remark is applicable to the legends, fables, myths, and poems of the Jewish Scriptures.

There is not a scientific or literary work in our own language which, literally interpreted, is not liable to the same objection. In common conversation we speak of a "smiling day," "a raging storm," "a deceitful disease," "a cruel disaster," though such things in themselves are absurd, and impossible. Figurative language pervades all literature. But such language is in every instance, the assertion of something in itself false in order to assist conviction and impress the truth with greater loveliness and force. "When we dip too deep in pleasure," says Dr. Young, "we always stir a sediment which renders it impure and noxious." Now understood literally this is a *lie*, yet it teaches a moral of surpassing beauty and importance. Had we space, innumerable instances of the same kind might be adduced. Now, this criticism is a key by which we may explain what infidels call the fables of the Old Testament. These fables, properly interpreted, are full of divine instruction, and happily impress upon our minds great doctrinal and practical truths, better than any other forms of speech could do. It is, indeed, a fable, that God has a body like ours, that he gets angry, is sorry and jealous; that he lives in a palace, rides in a chariot, has a sumptuous table, drinks the best wine, wears a sword by his side,

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uses a bow and arrows, bathes his weapons in the blood of his enemies, becomes weary, takes a spell of rest, or lies down to sleep for refreshment, hardens the hearts of the wicked, and thousands of things of a similar sort which might be mentioned. Yet every one of these fables, if rightly understood, teaches the most sublime and interesting truths, in a more forcible manner than could be done by any terms or metaphors known to man at the time of their utterance.

The most ingenious and potent assaults made by the deniers of inspiration have been directed against the Pentateuch, or five first books of the Old Testament. I have somewhere met with the saying, (I have forgotten in whose works) that the writings of Moses like a human being, have a soul inhabiting a frail, weak, erring body. By the soul is meant spiritual light concerning God, his providence, our accountability, a future, immortal state of existence, the duties of piety, purity, and disinterestedness. Why, Moses without the aid of inspiration, could not have written the decalogue, any more than he could have created Horeb, Sinai, the Nile, or the Red Sea. Now these religious truths are ever young, ever fresh, and undecaying. They are as glorious to-day as when first uttered. Their lustre never has been, and never can be eclipsed. By the body is meant the style in which Moses expressed these great eternal ideas. This was Hebrew, human, and earthly in its origin. It could not have been otherwise, by any possibility whatever.

Consequently, it contains many errors. There are in it misstatements with reference to geography, the shape of the globe, astronomy, dates, names, and the natural sciences in general. They were unavoidable — being inherent and essential in the structure of the language which he used. It was not the commission of Moses to teach Physics, Mineralogy,

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or Botany, but religion. If he has committed fundamental error with respect to this topic, then, I for one, am ready to acknowledge that his claims to inspiration are unfounded. The progress of science, through the long period of thirty-five hundred years, has made it apparent that Moses was not initiated into the principles of chemistry, natural philosophy, and the construction and relations of the celestial systems, which have, of late, been unfolded to an admiring world by Newton, Herschel, LaPlace, La-Lande and others. Now, future researches may multiply these mistakes to any extent, without prejudicing, in the slightest degree, his pretensions to the character of a divine teacher. To ignore these we must prove that his spiritual teachings are in fault — are untrue, unjust, cruel, oppressive, or in some other respect unworthy of Him in whose name he professed to speak and act. The errors alleged against the inspiration of Moses, were inseparable from the literature of the age in which he lived, and instead of discrediting, they confirm by many unanswerable arguments, the genuineness of his writings. Botanical writers tell us, that the plants which grow in mountains indicate, with great accuracy, the climates that belong to the different elevations; the vegetables and fruits of tropical regions may flourish at the foot, and the stunted evergreens of the polar circle may crown the summit. So enlightened critics are able to distinguish by the peculiar prevailing character in the compositions of an ancient author, the country in which he flourished, and the period of literature to which he belonged. The style of the English poet Chaucer, points out with unerring certainty the day in which he wrote. Dr. Lardner expresses the opinion, that the peculiar style of the four Gospels, demonstrates that they could not have been composed much earlier, nor much later than the period in which they are generally supposed to

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have originated. Michaelis has published a similar criticism in regard to the Pentateuch.

Those scholars, then, who have been laboring with a zeal worthy a better cause, to subvert the authority of the Old Testament, have signally failed of accomplishing their end. They really have achieved nothing more than the proving, that its literature is not faultless. No Protestant divine, now-a-days, pretends to assert the contrary. A perfect literature will never be realized this side the grave. The criticisms made against the Bible in our time, would excite only the smile of wise persons, did they not involve consequences so serious in their bearing on the spiritual welfare of mankind. In all grammars, dialects, and philologies extant among men, both sacred and profane, there are unavoidable blemishes which immemorial usage has sanctioned, and which no art of man will ever be able to expunge. These may be fairly wielded, and with prodigious effect in opposing the absurd dogma of plenary inspiration, and proving indeed, that there never was a book on earth whose diction was absolutely true and infallible. Such a wonder mankind will never behold. But as to disproving the inspiration of Moses, they are utterly impotent. I commend to the notice of these gentlemen the following lines of Pope: —

> "O, sons of earth! attempt ye still to rise,
> By mountains piled on mountains to the skies,
> Heaven still with laughter the vain toil surveys,
> And buries madmen in the heaps they raise."

But let me descend from the general and abstract, and give an illustration of my meaning by adducing a particular instance. Take for an example the first chapter of Genesis. Dr. Chalmers has said somewhere, that it contains all the essential germs and elements of both natural and revealed religion; for it teaches that mankind, yon canopy, and this earth

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with all therein, were called into existence, and are kept up by a Being who is all-wise, all-powerful, all-just, and all-good: consequently we have not been made in vain, and all our essential aspirations must be gratified. Eternal life is an inherent craving of our nature, the All-Good will therefore supply this want. He says the entire Gospel is admirably summed up by Tennyson in the following lines:

> "Thou wilt not leave us in the dust;
> Thou madest man for endless life;
> All *hope* they were not made to die."

The simple fact that we have an infinite Maker is the proof and pledge that we shall enjoy the immortality for which we sigh. Such is the divine part of this chapter. The words, the cosmogony, the six days' work, the figures &c., are human, and with all their errors, do not in the least weaken or obscure the momentous spiritualities which they signify. Moses does not so much as express an opinion as to the date of creation; he simply asserts that, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Now, suppose geology has proved that this beginning took place more ages ago than figures could express, or than there are drops of water in the ocean, this deduction of science would not militate in the least against any statement found in the Bible. When I was at Andover Theological Seminary, Professor Stuart taught, in the year 1816, that the 1st, and the 3d chapters of Genesis, and the first part of the 4th chapter of Matthew, should be interpreted as myths — that is, as fictitious or imaginary narratives, designed to inculcate certain great facts and leading principles belonging to the spiritual universe. The Unitarians are abused without stint for interpreting so many passages of Scripture as figures of speech. But the aforesaid Professor has published more of this kind of exegesis, than all the

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Unitarians that ever lived in the United States. Of course, his influence has been most deleterious to the peculiar interest of orthodoxy. He was a noble man, and so honest that he would not utter untruths as to the Hebrew and Greek grammars, to save the creed even of his own denomination. And yet, he considered the first chapter in the Bible as a gift from heaven of surpassing, inconceivable worth and glory, because it makes us certain that we live in the bosom of an infinite Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor.

Now I affirm that with two exceptions, all the arguments which are urged by the Rationalists both of Europe and our own country, to ignore the claims of Sacred Writ to supernaturalism belong to the inevitable, necessary imperfections of its literature. God is not accountable for the bad grammar of the inspired penmen; nor for their errors touching chronology and the natural sciences; nor for those many other things bearing an aspect of inconsistency, extravagance, or absolute incredibility, (which are capable of easy explanation to such as understand the customs of those ancient ages, or the physical history of those remote countries, or the peculiarities of their languages), than he is to be held responsible for the defects of the pages which I am now writing. These must be ascribed partly to my want of taste and knowledge, and partly to the generally received errors of the day in which we live. To overthrow the Bible, it must be proved to be *spiritually* untrue. Literary imperfections in the style make nothing against it. In one sense, the more of these there are the better, because they show the great antiquity of the Sacred records.

But I must say a word as to the exceptions above-mentioned. It is said that if an inspired book is wanted by one, it is wanted by all. But not one quarter of the human race have ever been favored

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with what is called the light of a supernatural revelation. This fact implicates, it is alleged by objectors, the goodness and impartiality of the Supreme Being. How so? Will any reflecting man assert that it is unjust for God to give to one what he withholds from another. Consider how circumscribed is the knowledge of reading, writing, and numbers; how narrow the range of good education, law, medicine, commerce, railways, telegraphs, free government, telescopes, and the mechanic arts in general. Did they not come from God? Are they not his truth? The distinctions which prevail among men are founded on reasons that we can neither fathom nor sit in judgment upon. The religion of the Bible is, after all, quite as enlarged and liberal as that of Nature or Deism. For it assures us that no one can be finally and forever lost, because he had no knowledge of the Bible. Paul lays down the doctrine, that the enjoyment of the Bible will not be imputed to any man for merit, nor the want of it be considered as a fault; but in judging men God will consider the advantages and disadvantages which result from the nature of the dispensation under which they lived, and will pass sentence upon them accordingly.

A Calvinistic divine is the author of the paragraph which follows: "When one takes a view of false religions, they seem to make no less an impression on the heart of those who are sincere in them, than the true religion does on the hearts of the faithful. In the one and the other, we see the same good intention, the same zeal, the same readiness to do everything they believe will tend to the glory of God; they love according to the idea they form of him; they worship him in their own way; and through fear of him endeavor to live irreproachably among men. Between them, indeed, there is this difference; the conceptions of the one are true, but

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the notions of the other are in many particulars false; and the service which one pays to God is a rational service, whereas the worship of the other is mixed with darkness and superstition." So in the opinion of this distinguished man, the poor Pagan who honestly worships the sun, moon, or stars, or a tree, and leads a conscientious life, is as acceptable to God as the most eminent Christian. I rejoice in being able to state, that this liberal doctrine, which must give the highest pleasure to every benevolent mind, is distinctly and most emphatically taught by Jesus Christ and his Apostles.

As an acquaintance with the arts of civilized life would augment the temporal advantages of the savage, so a knowledge of Scripture would tend to meliorate his spiritual condition on earth. This is the utmost for which the Bible advocate contends. Our Saviour teaches that God gives to one nation one talent, to another five, to a third ten, and expects from each a degree of improvement proportionate to this diversity of gifts. The argument before us boldly asserts that such a policy of administration is partial, cruel, unjust — that all should have precisely the same number of talents, and that no other theory is consistent with the doctrine of God's universal love. The sophistry of this kind of reasoning is self-evident.

Again, it is affirmed, that because every man has a principle of conscience, or power of discerning between the right and the wrong, implanted in his bosom by the Divine hand, he does not need the light of an inspired book to guide him in the path of duty. I reply, the Bible is not to be considered as a substitute for conscience, but as a system of superior means adapted to promote its development and efficiency. Conscience is certainly one of the most improvable faculties of our nature. What a difference between its decisions among the

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cultivated and well-informed, and the rude, vulgar, and illiterate. Without training, an honest conscience might betray us into the most heinous violations of rectitude. There is hardly an abominable act recorded in church history which was not perpetrated with the approbation of conscience. A dark, perverted, moral sense, is the most formidable enemy to human peace that our world has ever seen. The Bible provides the only effectual panoply against this foe. Suppose it should be said by some father, "God has given to my sons a principle of intelligence which will lead them spontaneously to the attainments of wisdom, therefore I need not be at the trouble and expense of getting books and teachers for them. They will be able, when they grow up, to become accomplished artisans, lawyers, statesmen, physicians, divines, or legislators, as they may happen to choose, without going through the usual routines of education." What would be thought of the sanity of such a parent? Equally absurd to imagine that conscience can become a true, steady, and undeviating guide to glory, without enjoying the light and advantages of careful discipline.

I will offer a few words in regard to the preponderating weight of authority concerning the divinity of the Scriptures. Many seem to think that the most eminent scholars have generally belonged to that class of reasoners called Deists. Among the men of profound thought and feeling, among the most intellectual and gifted, among the greatest minds of the Christian era, a large majority have avowed their belief in the inspiration of Moses and Jesus. Conspicuous at the head of these stands that illustrious name, Sir Isaac Newton: with him concur Locke, Bacon, Johnson, Addison, Grotius, Erasmus, and a host of others belonging to the brightest luminaries in the literary and scientific

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horizon of Europe. In our own land the preponderance of authority is on the same side. Allow me to mention the name of the younger Adams, who, as he was rising to make a speech, fell in an apoplectic fit, and expired on the floor of Congress. Once, in the course of an address before a meeting of the American Bible Society, in the city of Washington, he uttered these memorable words:—"Mr. President,—No person can be happy in the present world without a *God*, a *Bible*, and a *home*. Take away the Bible, and all that is most glorious, both in the first and last-mentioned objects, would fade away from the great heart of humanity."

I have named Sir Isaac Newton as a firm believer in revelation. It is recorded in his biography that the last ten years of his life were devoted to a most diligent and thorough study of the Scriptures. We are told that he was so completely absorbed in this employment that he could not be persuaded to suspend it for the purpose of solving some important and interesting problems belonging to natural science. He gave to the world, as the result of his investigations, some of the most valuable writings, which have ever been published on the sacred books. Yes. After more than forty years passed in exploring these outward systems that stretch onward and onward forever, he declared that he saw more affecting displays of the infinite One in the Bible than in the countless orbs around us, which roll their everlasting courses in the illimitable fields of space. What an eulogy upon the inspired volume, when we consider how great, strong, original, and enlightened was the mind which pronounced it:

> "Nature and all her works lay hid in night,
> God said let Newton be—and all was light."

But against all this, the fact is urged that a long list of men of pre-eminent genius and learning can

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be adduced who doubted and denied the inspiration of Scripture. It will not do to say, as many have, that the skepticism of these distinguished scholars was the consequence of their sinful and depraved hearts, so that their intellects were not able to perceive the realities and beauties of the spiritual world. It is an easy, but poor way of answering an argument, by saying that it cannot be sound and logical because it was dictated by a corrupt and sinful disposition. I have no doubt that many of the Rationalists are as eminent in moral qualifications as they are in literature and scientific acquirements. I think their unbelief is to be ascribed to other causes than want of piety, and especially to erroneous hypotheses concerning the true nature of the inspiration enjoyed by the writers of Scripture.

To illustrate this I will refer to some facts in my own personal experience. When I first read the Bible through in course, at a very early period of life, I was told by my parents and other venerable beloved instructors, that every thought and word of the book came from God. All other books, I was taught to believe, were made by human hands; but this was produced by that infinite Being who created the heaven and the earth. I received this doctrine with an implicit undoubting confidence in its correctness. From the dawn of childhood I have been in the habit of reading God's word every day. At first all that I found therein was looked upon as free from the slightest taint of error; but as my reasoning faculties grew stronger, and the range of my experience more expanded, I began to feel, in spite of myself, that there were some things in the Good Book which could not have emanated from the Supreme Intelligence. Doubts and misgivings arose in my soul which caused me great distress; for I thought they were sinful, and if I died under their dominion, it might involve me in eternal ruin.

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Happily by the teachings of learned men at Yale College and Andover, I was enabled to take larger views of inspiration—views which were not shocking to my reason—which relieved me from a heavy burden of anxiety, and filled my heart with the intensest emotions of joy, hope, and gratitude; though, in both of these places, some of the professors were the most rigid, uncompromising defenders of plenary inspiration. Professor Stuart, however, taught boldly, without mincing the matter, that the literature of the Old Testament—its idioms, peculiar phrases, tropes, and figures were of human origin, and consequently fraught, as all the best of man's works are, with many imperfections. I shall never forget one illustration, which he gave us in a lecture on Hebrew idioms and philology. He said—"It has been urged that the Bible presents views of the divine character which imply falsehood and blasphemy. For example, it teaches that the bosom of our Creator harbors bad passions, such as wrath, hatred, jealousy, revenge, &c. Now, these revolting representations of the Deity must be interpreted in harmony with the great principles and prominent laws of the Hebrew grammar. The Orientals were in the habit of ascribing all the modes of human suffering, caused by sin, to the anger of God, idiomatically or figuratively. This phraseology is simply what to us seems a strange, roundabout way of expressing the beautiful sentiment admitted by every Deistical writer or Rationalist in the world, that a sense of guilt is necessarily subversive of our happiness, and affects us precisely in the same manner in which we should be affected were the Creator to pour out upon us the vials of his wrath as a recompense for wrong doing." The same statements as to this topic may be found in "Campbell's Dissertations on the Four Gospels," "Dr. Macknight's Commentaries," "Horne's

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Introduction to the Study of the Holy Scriptures," and numerous other Trinitarian works of the highest repute. I am more indebted to the memorable man just named (Professor Stuart) than to any other person whom I remember for correct views concerning the divinity of the Sacred Books. I admire the superlative genius, abilities, and moral worth of those far-famed scholars who deny the particular hypothesis touching inspiration which is advocated in these pages. Let me not dogmatize on any disputed topic of theology—

> " Let not this weak, unknowing hand,
> Presume thy bolts to throw,
> And deal damnation round the land,
> On each I judge thy foe."
>
> " If I am right, thy grace impart,
> Still in the right to stay;
> If I am wrong, O, teach my heart
> To find that better way."

No superiority of genius and learning can, of itself, enable a man to discern and appreciate the beauties of revelation. This sublime attainment requires three qualifications which a very plain, uneducated person may possess—reading! praying! living! habitual meditation on the Scriptures, accompanied with prayer, and a pure, consistent, conscientious life. " If any man will do his will," says Jesus, " he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God," &c. Suppose a simple, unscholastic man, to have followed that sacred volume, which was the sole legacy bequeathed to him by poor and pious parents, and with the utmost faithfulness, from childhood till he has reached fifty years of age. It has been the book of his heart during all the ups and downs of his earthly pilgrimage. He has perused, prayed over, and enjoyed it, every day. All the time he has endeavored to act

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supremely with a reference to God, Jesus, and immortality. Now, let some scholastic neighbor, equal in acumen to Voltaire or Strauss, if you please, go and tell him what he has never thought of before, that the book is not true, "that it is a cunningly devised fable, imposed upon the fears and credulity of the ignorant, and upheld by the frauds and influence of a crafty and interested priesthood." It is but fabulous nonsense from Genesis to the end, which none except the unlearned, children, and those in their dotage—in second childhood—can regard as the word of God. And let him bring forward the most formidable array of arguments and criticisms which Infidelity can command to make out his case. What could this unlettered Christian say in reply? Could he scrutinize, by a logical process, the reasonings of his neighbor, and refute them? No more than he could calculate an eclipse, or take the dimensions of the planets. Still, he would say to this erudite friend, that he could not help believing in the truth of the Bible; that it was the book which his departed parents loved, that soothed and sustained them in their trials and conflicts to the last; that ever since their decease it had been his constant companion, guide, consolation, and support; that there was something within him by which he was assured that it was true, useful, and divine; that it was adapted to his wants, and had made his humble life a scene of discipline, improvement, peace, beauty, hope, and joy.

Now, the pulsations of such a man's heart are worth more on the subject than all the logical arguments in the world. So long as good men can repeat the decalogue, and the Lord's prayer, they must venerate and love the Scriptures. In the instance just named, the taking the Bible as the practical directory of his life—that is, the mere act

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and influence of living as if it were true—has built up in his soul that intimate, unwavering confidence in divine truth; that adamantine firmness of faith which no power of genius and learning merely can give, and which, thank Heaven, no wit, sneers, sarcasm—no resources of infidel philosophy whatever are able to overthrow. You could no more break down this man's love for the gospel than by a scornful laugh or cruel witticism you could expel from the heart of an intelligent, fond, devoted mother, her affection for that smiling, innocent babe, who is dearer to her than her own life. So long as mankind love the grand, harmonious appearance of nature in the heavens and the earth; so long as they feel a partiality, fondness, or attachment for pictures, statues, music, literature, the novel and the glorious, so long will they cling to the Bible, if for no other reason, because it makes such constant, overwhelming appeals to their sense of the beautiful and sublime. The only door to the beauties of Scripture is the living as if they were true. If a man leads a prayerful, conscientious, immaculate life, each passing week he will become more attached to these living oracles, till finally they will seem to him infinitely, unspeakably precious and exalted.

Whatever be the genius and abilities of a disbeliever in Scripture, his opinions to me are not worth a straw, if he be a man of immoral, dissolute habits. Such a one can no more understand the word of God than a little child that has not yet learned the alphabet could understand the glories of Homer. If the principles of revelation condemn a man's private habits and course of life, he will surely hate the Bible, and breathe out against it the bitterest denunciations. There was once a young man of high culture connected with my congregation in New Orleans. He was a regular

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attendant at church, and professedly a firm believer in the Christian revelation. He called on me one Saturday, in my study, to state certain difficulties which he had recently met with in reading the Scriptures. All of a sudden he had discovered that the miracles were incredible, that the gospel was full of contradictions and absurdities. In a word, he was very unwillingly compelled to adopt the platform of the Deist. I was grieved, and surprised, and strongly suspected that there was some screw loose in the life of my friend. A few months afterwards the enigma was solved. A little before this interview, the young man had set up an *establishment*, as it is sometimes called, in the Crescent City. From that time onward, his mode of life, his associates, his pleasures were low, grovelling, licentious, and dishonorable. Of course his invigorated optics saw, intuitively, the imperfections of the Bible. He was astonished that he could ever have believed in such a mass of crudities and superstitions. It may seem uncharitable to say that the change of his creed was brought about by the change in his mode of life just mentioned. I do not say this, but *he* himself confessed that such was the fact, in a conversation that I had with him when he was dying, and had no motive to deceive me or the world by any misrepresentations touching his personal history and experience.

The more thoroughly great and wise men peruse the Scriptures, the more they admire and love them. This fact is utterly irreconcilable with the supposition that they are not true. Lately I passed an evening in a literary and religious circle, where one topic of conversation was the usefulness of liturgies, or prayer books. Some person present remarked, that going over the same forms of devotional exercises every week, must, at length, render them dull and tiresome from the unavoidable effect

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of constant familiarity. An elderly lady of the company, distinguished for wisdom and piety, replied, "I am standing upon the verge of the grave, and have used the Episcopalian prayer-book ever since I can remember, and my interest and pleasure in it have been constantly increasing, and are greater now than at any former period of my life." She said this with a glow, an animation and pathos which made a deep impression upon the minds of the listeners. Significant fact! For this prayer-book, except a few theological words and formulas, contains only selections from the Bible.

For the last forty years, when at home, I have never failed, unless when sick, of reading portions of the original Scriptures, and along with them some of the most striking passages from the classical authors of Greece and Rome, early every morning, immediately after finishing my toilet. At the close of the day, in the room of Virgil, Homer, Cicero, Horace, I substitute our own classics, Shakspeare, Milton, Cowper, Bacon, or Webster, and the like. I have done this not so much from a sense of duty, as a gratification of my taste — because it makes me happy, raises me to heaven, and fills me with thrilling emotions of love, wonder, hope, and ecstatic raptures. Every passing week I have become more attached to the Good Book. Every passing week I have felt more deeply its immense, indescribable superiority to the finest portions of the uninspired literature just named. The genius of the former seems to me infinite, that of the latter I can comprehend. The suggestion that a work which makes such overwhelming appeals to my intellect, conscience, taste — all the noblest aspirations, and highest capabilities of my spiritual nature — is an imposture, the production of ignorant and wicked men — strikes me as one of the most preposterous propositions which can enter the human mind. It is more

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absurd than to assert that the Apollo Belvidere, Venus de Medici, and the most interesting compositions of ancient and modern times, were created by untutored barbarians, who had never learned to read, write, or cipher.

Let the greatest scholastic infidel now living commence the same process to-morrow. Let him as soon as he awakes, read some interesting portion of the Old or New Testament, and then kneeling down, offer fervent and earnest prayer, that he may have grace to pass through the events, trials, and employments of the day, in harmony with the divine wisdom, just read and pondered. Let him do the same the second day, and every subsequent morning for one year. At the expiration of this term he would find his mind enriched with an undoubting conviction of the truth of Christianity. He could not help feeling that it is true, divine, noble, perfectly adapted to his wants; that it has power to confer happiness which the outward world can neither give nor take away; that it is, indeed, "a ray from the Everlasting Light — a stream from the inexhaustible fountain of Heavenly Wisdom and Love." The above process is an infallible cure for the disease of infidelity, in its most dark, severe, stubborn, inveterate, and threatening form. No unbeliever, with the habits just described, could retain his skepticism. By moral influences absolutely irresistible, the demon would be expelled from his bosom.

My hopes for the ultimate triumph of the Bible are founded entirely on the superiority of its spiritual power, charms, and attractions. Dr. Dewey once said, "The longer a talented man is acquainted with Scripture, the more he will love it." This fact is in harmony with nature. Whatever is the object of our supreme affections, grows dearer by time. The longer the miser doats upon his treasures, the more he is attached to them. The patriot and the philan-

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thropist do not grow dull, as they advance in years, to the objects of their long solicitude and affection. Our native soil and our homes become dearer, the more familiar they are. In the same manner, one who has made the divine principles of Sacred Writ the home of his affections, will constantly see new charms in them. No matter how rude the structure, how fantastic the forms and styles which the taste of by-gone ages has given it; how numerous the marks and foot-prints of time upon its venerable aisles and hallowed recesses — it will be to him the dwelling place of his soul — where he continually holds communion with the ravishing forms of celestial wisdom and immortal beauty." Who is there living, except Dr. Dewey, capable of breathing ing forth such surpassing, almost superhuman eloquence, as that presented by the above extract?

One fact relating to my experience has made a deep impression on my mind. I have often been called to visit dying men, who had lived the open, avowed, notorious advocates of Deism. On asking them whether they would like to hear a portion of Scripture read, invariably they have replied in the affirmative. I used to carry in my pocket a few verses selected from different chapters of the Old and New Testaments, which seemed particularly adapted to such occasions. On hearing them they have sometimes exclaimed, "Are these indeed, the words of Scripture which you have just rehearsed? I never heard them before. I would give the whole world were it mine to feel certain of their truth." Yes, whatever men may have believed in the period of health and prosperity, when the sun of their temporal existence is sinking below the horizon, the messages of the Bible appear to them unspeakably precious. They inspire consolation and hope as the world of sense is receding forever from their view. Yes, the Bible speaks to the poor sinner as he stands

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on the verge of another state,—and the dark shadows of unbelief that had settled down upon his soul flee away. His mental vision catches glimpses of that better, sublimer, and more satisfying inheritance, which awaits us in the land of the deathless. The haggard features of remorse and despair often assume a calm, bright, and smiling expression, as the sufferer gazes upon the perspective of an existence which is opening before him, resplendent in all the glories of immortality. Is it credible that a book, (I repeat the question) which, as is universally acknowledged, can fit us for the duties and trials of active life; can fortify us against its assaults and temptations; can support and enliven our hearts in the hour of bereavement and death, and enable us to look forward to the brilliant scenes of a glorious hereafter — is it credible that a volume of such amazing power originated in the bosoms of ignorant, base, and unprincipled impostors and deceivers? We live in an age whose watch-word — whose motto is, *Reform, Repent.* The sublime conception is entertained by Christians and philanthropists of every name and clime, that the era will soon begin, when the sins and sufferings which now afflict mankind will be known only in the dark histories of other times. But what can bring about a consummation so devoutly wished? I reply, God's Holy Word, and nothing else. This engine has power to batter down the monstrous corruptions which oppress humanity. For, consider faith in revelation makes God, providence, accountability, and a future state, solid, substantial, and unquestioned realities in the view of its cordial, heartfelt recipient. They become as real to him as a bank-note, the house he lives in, his counting-room, his ledger, his cotton bales, or hogsheads of sugar. Of course his religion is a warm, living, practical, ever-present, and triumphant reality. All the evils which afflict society

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have their beginning in the soul. The spirit of Scripture is the only power which can enter the inmost, secret recesses of the mind; purify it from pollutions; soften its obdurate, deep-seated selfishness, and by the inspirations of truth and the Holy Spirit, turn men from the embrace of outward evil; strengthen them against allurements to sin; and cause their daily lives to emit the beams of righteousness and love.

Happy would it be for us, if we could receive the Bible as the richest boon of a Bountiful Father to the children of men — as an inexhaustible storehouse of divine and life-giving truth. Then, we should strive chiefly not for the attainment of material possessions, but for the glory of a character enriched with the never-failing strength and beauty of intellectual and spiritual excellence. He who feels and acts in accordance with the truth of revelation breathes the atmosphere of a higher world, and espouses the noble principles and sympathies that glow in the bosoms of angels. He cannot be permanently discouraged by the adverse allotments which befal him. Beyond the storms and darkness of mortality — beyond this mysterious drama of sin, disappointment, toil, privation, sorrow, and the grave, he beholds the transporting scenes of that spirit-land, destined to be the final inheritance of all the countless millions, who have been, or will yet be created subject to misery and death here, that they may be trained up for the more exquisite enjoyment of God hereafter. A believer in the Bible feels himself identified with eternity; his desires disdain all boundaries; he rejoices that, although his body must fade away like a flower, he has a safe, everlasting home in the bosom of a Father's all-embracing and immutable benevolence. His daily experiences whether prosperous or adverse, render his tastes and affections more refined, his character

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more noble, his hopes more bright, and lift to sublimer summits his confidence in the perfect, divine, and immortal.

Many contend that the communications of the Bible are not as important in our day, as formerly, in consequence of the discoveries which mankind now enjoy through the instrumentalities of *Modern Spiritualism*, as it is usually styled. Lately we are told the dead have come back from the "undiscovered country," and given us more clear, definite and interesting information concerning it, than can be found in the Christian revelation.

Are we not explicitly assured, that departed spirits cannot return to us, but that we must die and go to them, before we can enjoy their society? It is affirmed that the spirit land can exist or be seen with reference to those on this side the grave, only through the medium of anticipation or hope. We hope for it but are unable to see it. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," — cannot behold it. Such a vision while in the body is impossible. We must lay aside these material garments before the light of immortality can break in upon our ransomed, redeemed and glorified spirits. Not while sojourning in tabernacles of clay shall we be permitted face to face, to commune with those departed ones who now tread the verdant, happy, unfading fields of a higher existence. We must pass through the avenue of the grave in order to be able to behold their lovely forms, hear again their sweet voices, and hearken to the octaves and anthems that resound in the temple not made with hands. And if it were in our power to converse with them, what could they communicate for our good, which we have not already learned from Jesus and his Apostles.?

"I have read somewhere of a French vessel sent on a voyage of discovery, that was detained by ice-

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bergs and various disasters so long that it was supposed to be lost. But at length it returned, and drew near to the little town where the officers and crew had left their families. As soon as they perceived distinctly the cottages, gardens, orchards, meadows, and other objects endeared to them from childhood; their wives and children hastening to the beach, with outstretched arms and rapturous cries of welcome, the effect was so overpowering that the sailors could not work the vessel into port, but losing their self-command they leaped overboard to swim ashore." So if we saw distinctly, as with the bodily eye, the shores of the spiritual world thronged with those beloved friends whose bodies have been laid in the grave, and basking in the sunshine of immortality, should we not become too much excited to meet properly the trials, scenes and duties of an earthly pilgrimage; should we not lose soundness of mind, and sink into a state of utter recklessness, and wild, pitiable fanaticism? Should we not in all probability become suicides? I cannot but think that reason and revelation have already told us as much as we can bear — as much as it is best for us to know about the glories of a future state.

I have read most attentively the periodicals and other publications of the Spiritualists, which of late years have been circulating through the United States. I have, time and again, conversed with some of the most enlightened members of this sect, and attended on their preaching and lectures. I doubt not the purity of their motives, nor the superiority of their genius and learning. But, in justice, I am compelled to say that they have not told me anything new — anything which I had not before learned from Jesus and his Apostles. Nor have they presented to my mind a particle of evidence, that disembodied spirits have sensibly communicated

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to the world a single sentence of those compositions whose origin is ascribed to spiritual influences. For the rappings and kindred phenomena about which so much noise is made, and the instances of alleged clairvoyance and healing mediums, are easily explained upon those philosophical principles, which operating in a mysterious way, and under various forms, are, although invisible, everywhere active around us. Cuvier expresses the opinion "that all the particles of matter in the world, whether belonging to organic, or inorganic bodies, are constantly under the influence of galvanic attractions and repulsions, (that is, electricity or mesmerism), and are therefore producing, without cessation, decompositions and new arrangements."

After all the ado and fuss about Spiritualism, then, I am compelled to adhere not only with unshaken faith, but with a confidence increased, thirty, sixty, and even an hundred-fold — to the time-hallowed and time-honored system of the Bible — that system which was an ample support to our fathers; a lamp to their feet; consolation in trouble, sickness and death; and an all-sufficient proof and pledge of their immortality. This system contains not only all the doctrines, precepts, hopes, and promises which we need, but is also the ever-present, active medium of those spiritual manifestations which can be of any service to us this side the grave. I admit that man wants spiritual directions and influences every day of his tried and tempted life. Whoever daily reads the Bible has access to the best Medium the world has ever seen or ever will see. Yes, if we will constantly lift up our hearts to God, (according to the directions of Scripture) in earnest prayer and strong, holy resolutions to do his will; then in our chambers, family circles, and most secluded hours; also when abroad in the street, bank, office, counting-room, or any other scene of lawful enterprise — we shall be favored with beatific visions, which the unholy can

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never see; we shall hear sweet voices and music-notes entrancing the soul, filling the whole atmosphere; and that come not from some disembodied, fallible spirit which once dwelt with us in a house of clay, but from the depths of eternity, the centre of infinitude, the bosom of that Father in whom we live; who created and sustains a boundless universe.

And none of Adam's race can listen to those sounds of heavenly truth and eloquence without partaking of God's own life. As soon as they reach the ears of a sinner, however weak, prostrate, impoverished, fallen or corrupt may be his condition, he will instantly renounce every bribe of earth, all moral evil, every unlawful indulgence, every unhallowed thought, affection and habit; and clothed with the white robes of innocence, faith, wisdom and piety, ascend to take a place with angels and the spirits of the just made perfect; and his long agitated, care worn, agonized heart will begin to enjoy true peace and rest — a plenitude of unalloyed, unending bliss, derived from communion with his God and Saviour, and a transporting sense of the glories belonging to a future and everlasting existence.

"The devices of man originate in fancy, and expire with his breath. Devoid of power they play around depravity, like shadows round a mountain top, and vanish without leaving an impression." *But the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. By two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we have a strong, unfailing hope, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the Gospel* — a hope which the combined agency of all the spirits that have departed from these mortal shores, since the death of righteous Abel, could neither inspire nor invigorate.

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CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIAN MIRACLES.

I AM aware that it is common for the pulpit to lay down certain views concerning the character and works of Christ, the belief of which it enjoins as absolutely essential to forgiveness and salvation. To me it appears that such a style of address is neither reasonable nor in accordance with Scripture. So long as one's strongest feelings in regard to Christianity relate to its bearings on his personal safety here and hereafter, he cannot be in a proper state of mind to investigate it with a calm, candid, impartial, and independent weighing of the evidence on which the system of revealed religion is built. Dr. Chalmers, of Scotland, belonging to the Presbyterian church, in a letter addressed to a lady, and published since his death, says:—"That a man, who after the most thorough and strenuous investigation of which he is capable, is unable to discover the truth of the gospel, cannot be justly considered as being to blame for his unbelief." I rejoice that the influence and authority of this great name have given currency to a sentiment so pleasing to every just and expanded mind. "An honest man is the noblest work of God," is a doctrine derived from Scripture. Can the noblest man render himself liable to condemnation for the very quality which most exalts and ennobles him.

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Let us proceed at once to the question. Are the miracles recorded in the New Testament credible? In replying to this query, I would begin with the remark that, in my judgment, Christianity may be called a science with as much propriety as any other branch of knowledge with which we are conversant. The science of natural philosophy, for example, is a collection of general truths, established by inductive reasonings upon obvious, undeniable, or universally acknowledged facts. From particular phenomena it ascends to general principles, and finally lays down laws or conclusions co-extensive with the immense circle of the physical universe. Thus, Sir Isaac Newton, by the aid of a few simple facts familiar to every child, discovered the sublime law of gravitation. He ascertained that every material body gravitates towards every other; that every mass, however large, is attracted by every particle, however small; that every member of the Copernican system, and every system in the great system of systems is affected reciprocally by every other; and that the agency of this law, combined with another too well known to need a description, keeps all the innumerable worlds afloat in space, and causes them to move through their destined circuits in eternal order, beauty, and harmony. Just so, revealed religion is a system of truths established by legitimate reasoning upon undoubted, universally admitted facts. Yes, he who investigates Christianity aright, as truly deals with clear, definite, unquestionable phenomena as the chemist in his laboratory, the anatomist in his dissecting-room, the geologist who directs his researches into the mineral history and constitution of our planet, or the astronomer who looks through his telescope to examine the laws, bearings, and wonders of those celestial orbs which crowd the fields of space. Facts strong as any truths in natural science, as

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strong as any which are employed in arithmetic, geometry, or the infinitesimal analysis, constitute the immutable, eternal basis of our holy religion.

Let me offer an example of what I have intended to express in the foregoing remarks:—We know that the New Testament exists; we see, feel, handle, and read it. Here, then, in the beginning we take our stand upon an absolute certainty. We are just as certain that there is a New Testament as that the sun shines. By a chain of infallible proofs we trace the existence of this book back, from century to century, to the very age of the Apostles. We find numerous quotations from the gospels scattered throughout the literature of the last eighteen hundred years. Multitudes of these are collected and examined in "Lardner's Credibility," and similar works. By these means it is demonstrated that the New Testament was the production of a few rude, ignorant, untaught fishermen and publicans, who were born and bred in Galilee of Judea. They could neither read nor write, except by supernatural aid, and, upon the supposition that the gospel is not true, were the vilest of the vile in moral character. Now, we know that every effect must have an adequate cause. Could a half dozen of the most illiterate and vicious operatives now living in New Orleans, New York, or London, compose a book that anybody would read, on the grandest themes of moral and religious science? Could such men produce a work infinitely more true and beautiful on divine and spiritual subjects than any of those numerous writings of the last three thousand years, which have emanated from the greatest scholars of their respective lands and eras — scholars whose intellects were disciplined and enriched by all the various elements of science and literature? I repeat it, could such men have written the Sermon on the Mount (which Napoleon pronounced the sublimest

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composition in the world), the Parables of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the other discourses ascribed to our Lord? No more than they could have made the whole stellary system, with its myriads of planetary worlds, destined to revolve through eternity in the boundless realms of space. I say with Rosseau, that the *wisest men* contemporary with Jesus were just as inadequate to the invention of the gospel as they were to the raising of the dead, whether of Jewish or Pagan origin. Under the circumstances the invention would have involved a greater miracle than is implied in its reality. As the sun points all eyes to an infinite author, so does the New Testament show to candid, unprejudiced inquirers, by its universally acknowledged history and inherent attributes, the superhuman character of its origin. Look at the following undisputed and indisputable facts:—The personal reality of our Saviour who was born in Palestine about eighteen hundred years ago; his crucifixion under Pontius Pilate; his assertion that he came forth from God, and was empowered by him to work miracles and utter prophecies; his peculiar teachings; the character, conduct, and sufferings of the earliest Apostles; the peculiar style in which the gospels are written; the mighty revolution which they produced in the world, reaching through so many ages, extending to all the institutes of civilized life, and originating new, loftier, and nobler forms of social order, refinement, learning, and philanthropy. Upon definite and certain phenomena like these, Christianity is built — phenomena as undoubted as the facts and principles of astronomical science or natural philosophy.

The astronomer tells the world how many miles off the planets are from the sun, and from each other; he presumes to state the dimensions of their orbits; their periods and the rapidity of their revo-

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lutions; and even what are their absolute and relative weights, &c. But there is not an item of this noble science that rests upon clearer, stronger, or more conclusive evidence than the proofs by which the truth of the New Testament is established. Now, all these numerous arguments co-operate in demonstrating the reality of the miracles recorded by the Evangelists. To illustrate what I mean, let us fix our attention on a single instance—the resurrection of our Saviour from the dead. Paul says, "If Christ is not risen, then we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ." All that has been said or written on this topic, by friends or foes to Christianity, may be reduced to these three propositions:—First: it is alleged by some, that those contemporaries of our Saviour who asserted that he rose from the dead were impostors and deceivers. Secondly: others have maintained that the original apostles and witnesses of the resurrection were upright and conscientious men, but enthusiastic devotees, who were led by some kind of infatuation to believe in a fact which never really occurred. They thought that they uttered a solemn truth in announcing to the world that Jesus had risen from the dead. But they were deceived by the influence of ardent and disordered imaginations. Thirdly: it is contended that Jesus actually died and rose again; and the testimony of Scripture is sufficient evidence of the fact to satisfy the enlightened, sincère humble inquirer after truth. Let us briefly examine these propositions in the order just specified. I shall not attempt so much to spread out particular arguments as to exhibit some of the general principles of reasoning which the advocates of Christianity rely upon to prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I shall endeavor to use the plainest words—words, the meaning of which must be obvious to the most uncultivated minds.

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Can the proposition be maintained that those contemporaries of Jesus, who bear witness to the fact of his resurrection, were bad men, intentional deceivers and impostors? I think not. All writers on mental philosophy, without an exception, teach the doctrine that there is in human nature an inherent love of veracity so strong that the worst men always choose to tell the truth when it promises to answer their ends as well, or better, than falsehood. In other words, unprincipled men never try to deceive without a motive. It is morally impossible for them to do so. But the proposition before us supposes the apostles to have embarked in a profound scheme of imposture without any clear and adequate inducement. Oh, no, it may be replied, like other fanatics and innovators, they might have hoped by deception to become the founders of a new sect, which would ultimately subject multitudes to their sway, and exalt them to temporal wealth, power, and glory. I answer, the circumstances in which the apostles were placed preclude the possibility of their having been actuated by any such vulgar, unhallowed motives of personal ambition.

Reflect that Jesus was a notorious, most distinguished personage. He was well known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, having often visited their splendid temple in his official capacity, as well as the synagogues, villages, and towns generally, throughout Palestine. He was apprehended by the civil government, openly tried as a malefactor before the highest tribunal in the land, and condemned to suffer a capital punishment. All admit that this sentence was carried into execution in the most public manner by the authorized agents of the government. They nailed him to the Cross on which he expired. By their orders the body was taken down, and laid in a new tomb hewn out of the solid rock. Then they placed an immense stone

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against the door, and stationed a strong band of soldiers around the tomb to prevent a surreptitious removal of the body. Shortly after the crucifixion, a half dozen of poor, despised, persecuted men, who were without friends, science, wealth, power, and temporal resources of any description, came forward, and proclaimed in the most public manner that the sepulchre of Jesus was emptied; that he was not there, and had been seen by his disciples alive. Let it be observed that they solemnly affirmed, in the very presence of the soldiers who guarded the tomb, before the rulers that had ordained the crucifixion, with all their satellites and admirers, and in the hearing of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that the Son of God had come to life on the third day after his decease. Now, upon the supposition that they deliberately uttered a falsehood, must they not have foreseen with absolute certainty that the body would have been forthcoming upon the spot, in less time than it took them to announce the forgery, with the prints of the iron in the hands, feet, and side, to overwhelm them with complete, and instantaneous discomfiture? Since the world began, was it ever known that impostors have attempted to palm upon those around them, a fiction which they knew beforehand, with intuitive certainty, no person living could be made to believe, and which, consequently, would expose them to scorn, derision, contempt, perhaps imprisonment and death? Impostors never act in this way. No. Had the apostles been intentional deceivers, they would have located the scene of the resurrection far off, in some distant, unknown part of the globe, and in some remote epoch of time concealed from the view of criticism by the thick mists of antiquity.

I will illustrate the force of this argument by adducing an instance or two. I am now writing in

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Louisville, (Ky.) A short time ago a gentleman (Mr. B.) died here, who was universally known and beloved. A large concourse followed his remains to their final resting place in the Cave Hill Cemetery. Hundreds of those long acquainted with him saw the corpse, attended his funeral, and beheld the closing of his tomb. There are men living in this place as wicked as were any of the contemporaries of Jesus. But are there any among us silly, weak, mad enough to tell the following story:— "This morning, the 26th of July, 1857, at sunrise, we were standing in the Cave Hill Cemetery by the tomb of Mr. B—. All at once the ground trembled beneath and around us, the grave opened, and Mr. B— came forth alive, and unharmed. We conversed with him several minutes, took him by the hand, and are sure as to his identity. Besides, he stepped into the carriage and rode to the city with us, and we left him at his late dwelling on Chesnut Street." Could any sane men, I repeat it, be found in this city weak and wicked enough to originate such a vile fabrication? Why? Because no conceivable motive could possibly operate on their minds to induce them to practice such consummate folly. But human nature was the same in the time of Christ as it is to-day. No bad men lived then who could have been persuaded to act in the manner just specified. The known, universally recognized laws of the human mind render such a supposition ridiculously absurd.

Besides, it would be almost impossible for us to believe in the resurrection of Mr. B—, under the circumstances imagined, upon the bare assertion of the men above mentioned, however high their standing and spotless their character. We should all exclaim, if Mr. B— is actually alive, let us see him taking his former place in the church, the counting-room, the bank, the exchange, the family

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circle, and mingling again in the scenes and recreations of this mortal state. Nothing but such an appeal to our senses would completely satisfy us. Let it be that the whole number of those personally acquainted with Mr. B— before his death amounted to five hundred; each of these behold, and converse with him, and testify to the fact of his resurrection. Would not their testimony spread belief in the extraordinary narrative throughout Louisville, throughout all Kentucky, throughout the United States, and the whole civilized world? Nothing could resist such an appeal to the senses. Now, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, at the time of the alleged resurrection of Jesus, were in circumstances very similar to those above mentioned, yet three thousand received the miraculous fact in one day, and among them some who aided in the crucifixion. It is obvious that nothing but irresistible demonstration, overpowering evidenee, could have created such a faith.

But the theory before us supposes the apostles to have acted, not only without any assignable motive, but also in defiance of the strongest inducements which ever swayed the human mind. Imagine that the individuals whom I have just set before you, in the attitude of asserting the resurrection of one of our neighbors recently deceased, knew beforehand that it would be impossible for them to make such an affirmation without being immediately apprehended as culprits, loaded with irons, dragged to the criminal court, and thence carried out to suffer a painful and ignominious death. In the face of a doom so certain and so terrible, would it be in their power to utter the forgery in question? But such was the condition of the apostles when they first bore testimony to the resurrection of Jesus.

This is not all. After the apostles began to en-

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counter persecution and all the bitterest forms of punishment which their enemies could inflict, at any moment they might have obtained deliverance and exaltation to the highest glories of earth, by a recantation of the erroneous statement which so exposed them to excruciating sufferings and death itself. But all the original confederates in the Christian fraud, as it has been styled, although the scorn, hatred, and fiercest wrath of a world were constantly beating upon them, persisted through life in declaring that *the Lord was risen indeed*, and at last sealed their testimony with their blood. Could impostors have acted in this manner?

These indubitable facts, it seems to me, are a species of evidence sufficient to convince the most skeptical. Could a few impoverished, ignorant, prostrate and imbecile deceivers of Galilee have originated the magnificent project of establishing a pure, beneficent, and universal religion which was to last to the end of time? How passing strange, after the conception was formed, that for the means of carrying out this sublime plan, they should have relied entirely upon the efficacy of a single, extravagant, unparalled, audacious and incredible falsehood! Yet their efforts were crowned with success. They actually befooled the whole world into a belief of a monstrous fiction, if Christianity be not true. An absolute, foolish imposition triumphed over all the religious establishments of the age, and in the third century, as Mr. Gibbon remarks, "the banners of the Cross were planted on the palace of the Cæsars." In addition, these vile, stupid men invented the best system of ethics which the world has ever seen. The new Testament contains a scheme of truth and duty, in which the most scrutinizing minds can detect no error — can point out nothing wanting, and nothing superflous. Besides they lived in harmony with the precepts which they

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laid down. Their conduct was only divine, lovely, peerless, and immaculate. There is not then the shadow of a reason in support of the first position that the original witnesses to the resurrection of Christ were corrupt and unprincipled men. The circumstances above mentioned are not imaginary. They may be found substantiated in Paley, Chalmers, Lardner, and other accredited writers on the subject. It is important to observe that the sufferings to which the early Christians submitted, are not referred to for the purpose of proving the truth of their religion, but simply the fact of their sincerity.

I will now look at another form of unbelief touching the resurrection. Many of the ablest writers against miracles take the ground, that the original witnesses of the resurrection were most upright, conscientious devotees, who firmly believed what they said was true. We are told that they were inspired with such a belief by the power of *religious enthusiasm.* This phrase is used to denote the intensest kind of sentiments and feelings, with respect to what a person regards as the true — the divine faith. Now it is an invariable law, that when enthusiasts of any description fancy that they see visions and have revelations from God, these visions and revelations are always in favor of the system which they most love and admire. This is admitted by all writers on the subject. Suppose an honest, pure-minded member of the Roman Catholic church to be led by the strength of his religious feelings, to regard a mere figment of the imagination as a reality, would not the fancied fact, of course, harmonize with his predominant and established belief at the time? So if the evangelical writers had been made to believe in dreams by the influence of a morbid and excessive enthusiasm, these dreams would have been in accordance with that peculiar system of faith in which they had been trained, and to which

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they devoted themselves with the strongest, most absorbing convictions and attachments, that can sway and interest the human mind. I will give a single instance of the application of this principle.

Paul, as all know, was a Jew of the strictest sect at the time of his conversion. He assures us that he verily thought nothing could be more pleasing to God, than his conduct in persecuting and slaying the disciples. When in the act of carrying out what he actually believed to be the noblest enterprise in which he could engage, in one moment, a vision, arising from a diseased, enthusiastic mind — a mere fancy, a picture of an excited imagination, so wrought upon him, that he renounced the religion which of all others he most loved, and took up with one that he most hated, despised, trampled upon, and was in the act of putting forth his highest efforts to annihilate. To make this idea more striking I will present an illustration. One of the most distinguished of those preachers belonging to the Spiritualists in the United States, has announced to the public, that he will deliver a discourse on Spiritualism this evening, in Mozart Hall, on Jefferson street. The spacious room is filled. At the appointed time the preacher walks from the recess and takes his seat on the platform. After a few moments of profound silence, we will suppose that he arises and pronounces something like the following address: "Ladies and Gentlemen, — I have this moment had a special revelation from Jesus Christ, assuring me that the modern doctrine of spiritual manifestations is not true — it is a most wild, groundless delusion. Heretofore I have looked upon this system of faith as supremely divine, beneficent and beautiful. For years I have been doing all in my power to build it up. I would most sincerely ask the pardon of all those who may have been deceived on this topic by my tongue, or pen. Henceforth I

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shall labor as far as possible, to undo the evils that may have been caused by the strange hallucination to which I have been subjected. I shall now attempt to convince you how false, gross, weak and deformed are those doctrines which, till a moment since, appeared to me supernal, grand, harmonious, and lovely as heaven itself."

Now, I ask, can a sensible man believe, that there is any law of imagination which could completely metamorphose the profoundest, most maturely formed and cherished views of this spiritual preacher in an instant of time? A child may see, that under the circumstances, a fancied revelation could no more achieve such a result than it could erect a palace, make a railway, or build a bridge across the Ohio river, to connect Louisville with the State of Indiana. So neither could a similar cause have instantaneously changed sincere, accomplished, persecuting Saul, into a warm, devoted, magnanimous, and self-sacrificing apostle.

Moreover, follies of this kind are in general short-lived, and transitory. Time, of necessity, soon overthrows the illusions of mere opinion. But the enthusiasm of Paul, as it is styled, lasted forty years—till he was put to death. His parents, relatives and revered friends made every effort to induce him to return to the faith and fold of his ancestors — to renounce the folly and madness of travelling over the world to preach a wretched, unpopular superstition. He did not respond to their entreaties in harsh, proud, or fretful terms, but meekly and mildly replied, "Would to God, ye were all such as I am this day, except these bonds." To him those chains seemed like the wreaths and diadems of angels. He saw through the pomps and vanities of earth. He felt "what shadows we are and what shadows we pursue." Jesus had shown him that true peace comes not from tables of abundance, from soft-bed-

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ded comfort, from the delights of wealth, or the breezes of popular applause. He had learned that nothing else can satisfy the human heart but God, truth, honor, duty, conscience, and that higher immortal life which awaits us beyond the grave. Buoyed up by such unearthly convictions, he exclaimed, "I thank God that I am appointed to labor amid the severest persecutions, to kindle up on the altars of Paganism that fire from heaven which will burn brighter and brighter to the end of time — to drop link after link of that chain of celestial magnetism destined finally to encompass and vivify a lost world."

Then it is admitted that enthusiasm has a peculiar style of speaking and writing, by which it can easily, always, and certainly be recognized. The most eminent Rationalist of the present century has published the following criticism: "The epistles of Paul must be genuine, because the style is so natural that no imposter could personate it, however great his resources of genius, inventive talent, or learning." In my judgment this remark is applicable to the entire New Testament. But with them contrast the writings of enthusiasts of any age or clime. How unspeakably different! I am familiar with some of the most celebrated of these productions. They abound with strong pictures of the imagination, far-fetched effusions of fancy, uncommon, polysyllabic words, and rounded, harmonious periods. Their rhetorical flourishes "amaze the unlearned, and make the learned smile." To use common parlance, the enthusiastic authors delight in high-flown, pompous, imposing, inflated, unintelligible words and phrases. They utter nothing with directness and simplicity. They cannot stoop to the vulgarity of a plain, homely, every day dialect. Hence, they are always on stilts, dealing in transcendentalisms, full of that frippery — that tinsel, foppish, showy

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eloquence, which charms sciolists and sophomores only. In every sentence we see marks of artistic contrivances, and nothing of the nature and ease which characterize thoughts that come warm, rich, and living from the inspiration of the soul. Their figures and ornaments are sometimes splendid, but in general they display a taste, as extravagant, ultra and morbid, as the minds whence they have emanated. If Jesus, Saul, and their coadjutors had adopted such a style we never should have heard of them. Long since their names would have been obliterated from the records of literature. Of this kind of style we have a most perfect exemplification in the sermons, lectures, books and periodicals of the modern Spiritualists. A few days ago I came across an address which purports to have been uttered by Daniel Webster since his death. If the composition was really his, then that wonderful, immortal man must have lost the fine literary taste which he uniformly displayed on earth. His loftiest flights now, according to the document just referred to, consist of the rodomontade, the jejune, flimsy, unnatural rhapsodies of wretched superstition.

Every man of cultivated taste knows that there is a most intimate connection between a man's thoughts and mental character, and his peculiar mode of expression. An author's style is a picture of the ideas and principles that reign in his soul. If these ideas and principles are really noble, they will spontaneously clothe themselves in corresponding majesty of language. The vast majority in Christian lands have neither the leisure nor the means to investigate the credibility, upon exegetical principles, of what the Evangelists have told us about the resurrection of Christ. Nor is such an investigation at all requisite to a sound, lively, and supporting faith in this prominent point of the Christian system. He who has an unprejudiced mind can hardly take his

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Bible, and sit down alone in his room, and peruse the simple, touching, impressive, unadorned narratives of our Saviour's death and resurrection, contained in the New Testament, without realizing the truth of the words — *The Lord is risen indeed* — without feeling a thrill of joy and transport rushing through every avenue of his soul — lifting his thoughts to God, heaven, and the life immortal.

The habitual perusal of the gospels, with earnest prayer and rectitude of conduct, will inspire a more immovable faith in the resurrection than any amount of study and scholarship could produce, unaccompanied with a good life — a faith, thank Heaven, which no destructive criticisms, as to the mere letter and records of Scripture, can ever weaken or destroy. Grant that all which Strauss, Parker, and others have published concerning the verbal inaccuracies, contradictions, and incredibilities of the different accounts which the Evangelists have given of the resurrection of Jesus be true, it could not in the slightest degree discredit or diminish the confidence of mankind in their general incorruptibility. These accounts are so fraught with the mien, spirit and genius of truth, that fair, unbiassed minds *cannot* doubt their veracity. When I read the gospels touching the resurrection, I feel their truthfulness just as I feel the beauty of a star, a rose, a tree, a rivulet, a poem, a picture, a statue, the melody of birds, or the notes of an orchestra — just as I feel the truth of arithmetic, Euclid, trigonometry, algebra, or the differential and integral calculus. There is a soul infused into the narratives, by Almighty God, which interests and touches the hearts of all readers, and which no criticisms, however erudite and ingenious, will ever be able to extinguish, any more than they could blot out sun, moon, and stars. I never had any fears as to the ruthless attempts of the Rationalists to overthrow

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the miracle of our Saviour's resurrection. They have been of great service to Christianity. The more closely truth is examined and sifted the brighter will it shine. The only wonder to me is that any well-informed person can doubt the doctrine of a divine and supernatural agency in the production of the miracles and revelations recorded in the New Testament. The most inexplicable phenomenon which I have ever witnessed is the mind of Strauss, Parker, or Emerson—a mind so large, so noble, and so rich, and, at the same time, insensible to what I consider the most peculiar, distinguishing glories of the gospel.

Yet, in justice I must remark that a belief in the miracles of Scripture should not be considered as an attribute indispensably necessary to a Christian *character*. For the inspired writers assure us that genuine piety is a prerogative of the *heart*, not of the *head*. The intellect may be in error when the affections beat in unison with the will of Heaven. Are there not as many wise and excellent persons among the Jews, in proportion to their whole number, as among the Christian sects? Yet they disbelieve and deny the truth of the New Testament history. I cannot say that a man must adopt any particular set of opinions in order to be saved, because in the Bible the terms *religion* and *goodness* are *synonymes*. Whoever has a right temper, a benevolent spirit, the sunshine of a good conscience, the deep, but placid, serene, and soothing affections of reverence, and gratitude for the Supreme Parent, will be accepted, whether his belief be Hebrew, Christian, Pagan, or Mahometan.

I believe as strongly in the resurrection of Jesus as I do in the existence of a God. Now, I have a neighbor who rejects this prominent article of my creed, and I rejoice to confess that he is greatly my superior in intellectual and moral attainments. He

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is more wise, more learned, more pious, more charitable, and more like Christ in his disposition and life. Still, with all my inferiority, it is both a duty and privilege to follow the dictates of my own judgment and conscience, though they move on a plane, comparatively low, grovelling, and narrow. No man has a right to set up his own mind as an exclusive and universal standard on this or any other topic of Christianity, to assume that he enjoys a monopoly of light, sanctity, and the influences of God's holy spirit. It is a sickening, most offensive, and criminal bigotry to assert that our neighbor is estranged from the first principles of Christianity, because he does not concur with us in opinion as to certain controverted articles of belief.

To me it is plain that the scheme of reconciling what is told us in the gospels about the resurrection of Jesus, with the integrity of the apostles, although they testified to an absolute chimera, is only and grossly absurd. According to the theory referred to, a mere myth, a fable—and a fable to which no encouragement was afforded by any form of superstition then existing, and which could not be received as truth without sacrificing all that man holds dear on earth—rose to such a prodigious influence in the short space of thirty or forty years all over the civilized world, as to be looked upon in the light of a well established and accredited item of veritable history. For, in the lifetime of the apostles, and immediately after, no enemies of the gospel, either Jewish or Pagan, ever presumed to call in question the reality of the miracles, which it was alleged Christ had performed. The only point of discussion with them was whether the miracles, supposing them to have been actually performed, were a demonstration of his divinity. Some contended that Jesus did his wonderful works by a superior knowledge of Nature's laws, magic art, diabolism, mes-

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merism as now called, or what in our day would be denominated spiritual influences. But it was universally conceded that the supernatural deeds were really accomplished, as set forth in the New Testament This fact has most important bearings on the subject of this chapter. Yes, upon the ground that Jesus was not raised from the dead, in defiance of legislative influence, armies, navies, priesthoods, literature, philosophy, fashion, religious prejudices, education, popular predilections, and every other kind of antagonism conceivable, or possible, in the compass of a few years, a mere *myth*, or rather a collection of *myths*, took complete possession of the judgment, intellect, heart, faith, hopes, and affections of the human family. This is the most fashionable form of infidelity prevailing in our day in regard to that fundamental point—the resurrection of the Son of God. Yet, it seems to me so wild, romantic, far-fetched, extravagant, and incredible, as hardly to deserve the respect of this hasty notice.

The two first propositions named above, being abandoned, the only remaining one that calls for our notice is that which asserts the actual resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and that the gospels furnish evidence of the fact sufficient to satisfy every honest, and impartial inquirer after truth. And this evidence is a great deal stronger than most persons imagine. I will offer an illustration of this remark. Suppose that at the expiration of the next hundred years, some one, in the plenitude of his wisdom, should write a book to prove that no such man as Gen. Washington ever lived, and that all which biographies say about this distinguished person are only myths. What reply, if any, would be made to a position so extraordinary? Why, simply this, that the uniform, consistent, and unanimous testimony of the contemporaries of Washington establishes his reality upon an immovable basis.

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Precisely the same argument demonstrates the existence of Jesus and his miracles. It is a complete and triumphant reply touching the impossibility of supernatural works, and the alleged discrepancies of the Evangelical historians.

Let me present a synopsis of the reasoning on this point, used by Paul in the 15th chapter of first Corinthians. He asserts "that Jesus rose from the dead, and that, after his resurrection, he showed himself alive in different places, and on different occasions, to his apostles, who having accompanied him during his ministry, were perfectly acquainted with his form, his visage, his voice, his manner of speaking, and every other circumstance by which the identity of any person can be ascertained, and who, for that reason, were well qualified to judge whether the person that appeared to them was really their Master risen from the dead. He was seen by above five hundred brethren at one time, and by Paul himself, in different places and at different times. And as these witnesses had no private interest to serve by testifying Christ's resurrection, but, on the contrary, exposed themselves thereby to innumerable evils, their testimony merits, in every respect our most cordial reception."

"This argument of Paul not only shows in what manner the belief of the resurrection of Christ was originally established in the world, but it makes mankind sensible that the prevalence of that belief in the first age was well founded; and that we likewise, who at this distance of time entertain the same belief, have good reason for so doing; and that our Master, by his resurrection from the dead, is powerfully demonstrated to be the Son of God, and our religion is shown to be divine. He goes on to say, if Christ is not raised, then he is an impostor, who hath deluded the world with false hopes; and also his apostles are found to be false

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witnesses, because we have testified, to the infinite dishonor of God, that he hath raised an impostor from the grave. Further, to show you the absurdity of imputing to us apostles, the crime of deliberate falsehood, in testifying that God hath raised an impostor from the dead, whom he hath not raised, consider that, if there is to be no resurrection, consequently no future state, our only motive to commit the awful crime charged upon us must be some advantage which we expect to reap from it in this life. Yet, instead of any advantage, we have, by preaching Christ's resurrection, drawn on ourselves from every quarter, the greatest temporal evils; insomuch that if in this life only we have hope of advantage from Christ, we are of all men the most miserable. This reasoning demonstrates that the witnesses of Christ's resurrection were themselves fully persuaded of the truth thereof. Wherefore, being perfectly qualified for judging, and having had the best opportunities to form a correct judgment, they could not possibly be deceived as to the matter of the resurrection of Jesus, and had no motive whatever to deceive the world." (Macknight's Commentary.)

To me the resurrection of Christ is the only sure basis on which to build the hopes of immortality. "*Because he lives, we shall live also,*" reasons an apostle. Before the advent of Jesus the wisest men expressed their doubts as to a future state. The general creed of the ancients on this topic was described by a Greek poet, who flourished more than two thousand years ago, in the following lines:

"Alas! the tender herbs, and flow'ry tribes,
Though crushed by winter's unrelenting hand,
Revive and rise when vernal zephyrs call;
But we the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
Bloom, flourish, fade, and fall — and then succeeds
A long, long, silent, dark, oblivious sleep;
A sleep, which no propitious power dispels,
Nor changing seasons, nor revolving years."

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Jesus Christ appeared to scatter the clouds which from the beginning had concealed the future from the view of mortals. He came "to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The essence of Christianity is the fact of Christ's resurrection.

Yes, this is that rock of ages against which the gates of *Hades*, that is destruction, can never prevail. The waves of skepticism may roll over it; the storms of unbelief may beat thereon, but it will never be moved out of its place. It is a pyramid towering with indestructible glory; the bond which unites earth and heaven, time and eternity, the mortal and immortal. It is a spiritual light-house, that sends a cheering beam to every point on the tempestuous ocean of life. It dissipates the night of the grave; it illumines the dark valley and shadow of death.

"Thou art gone to the grave; but we will not deplore thee;
Though sorrow and darkness encompass the tomb;
The Saviour has passed through its portals before thee;
And the lamp of his love is thy guide through the gloom."

It presents the cup of hope and joy to the lips of the dying man, gently wipes the tear from his eye, and points him to glories unalloyed and unending in the Paradise above. The resurrection of Jesus is the only clear, absolute, conclusive proof of an hereafter. Without this, no matter how great, prosperous or powerful we might be in a worldly point of view, all our prospects would be limited to the narrow scenes of earth and time. We should live only to be broken by toil: to be wasted by sickness; to be racked with pain; to be desolated by one wave of sorrow after another, till absorbed and swallowed up in the dark gulf of annihilation — till merged in a common destiny with the brute that perisheth. But saying from the heart, "*Because Jesus lives, we*

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shall live also," a Christian faith enables us to triumph over all that is vile and polluted in our present allotments. Standing upon a lofty summit we look out upon a land where there is no night—

> "Where everlasting spring abides,
> And never-withering flowers;
> Death like a narrow sea divides,
> This heavenly land of ours."

There we shall be permitted to see that time, nature, and death, with all their vicissitudes and wonders, were but the means which Providence employed to expand our intellects, refine our taste and affections, ennoble our characters, and make us finally meet to be introduced to the unimaginable fates and fortunes of the inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled and unfading. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

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CHAPTER IV.

OBJECTIONS TO THE MIRACLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ANSWERED.

It is alleged by the Rationalists that miracles are unnecessary and superfluous; they accomplish nothing which could not have been as well, or even better, done without their instrumentality. A merchant residing in Louisville employs agents to transact business for him in New York, Liverpool, London, &c., because he cannot be in all these places at the same time. But, He who is omnipotent and omnipresent, occupying every moment of duration and every point of space, who, by wise, eternal laws, governs suns, seasons, winds, weather, tides, tempests, atoms, planets, and systems, might have ruled the human family, and conducted them to eternal life by similar means, without having recourse to the costly, complicated, strange, incredible, and supernatural proceedings recorded in the gospels. All could comprehend such a plan, and would be smitten with its beauty. Then God's moral department would have been in glorious harmony with the wide realms of nature; then human souls would have been opened and beautified by laws as resistless and eternal as those which produce the foliage, verdure, and flowers of spring.

I will not say that this objection betrays an entire absence of those qualities which distinguish the most sound, enlarged, and philosophical minds, but

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I have the deepest conviction that it would be very foolish in me, or any writer, to attempt its explanation. The objector presumes to ask why the great Parent was pleased to adopt a certain set of measures in regard to man's salvation in preference to others? Who can answer such a question? It is just as absurd as to inquire, why do suns rise, seasons succeed each other, the earth spin on its axis, tides ebb and flow, or rivers descend? Why are things ordained as they are?

> "He who through vast immensity can pierce,
> See worlds on worlds compose a universe;
> Observe how system into system runs,
> What other planets circle other suns,
> What varied being peoples every star,
> May tell why Heaven has made us as we are;
> But of the wisdom of a boundless frame,
> Can thy pervading soul look through,
> Or can a part contain the whole?"

"O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory forever." Amen.

Again, I would reply, "that God's ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts." Throughout the natural world all human interests are determined and controlled upon the principles of a mediation, or agency, which involve as much of the mysterious as the miracles of the New Testament. The Creator does not bestow upon us any favors directly, but always by the hands of some agent. Yon luminary in the skies is a mediator between God and men, and pours out upon us the

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inestimable blessings of light and heat, without which the whole creation would soon become cold, cheerless, deformed, and desolate, and all animated beings would dwindle and die. The atmosphere is a mediator which operates incessantly to vitalize the blood, and send through our physical frames an unintermitted current of joy, peace, and health. Other intervenient agents, which cannot be mentioned, are employed to spread over our fields and plantations the beauty and wealth of a luxuriant vegetation; to give us our daily bread, and the refreshment of nightly repose. Yes, the blue, broad, boundless canopy; earth, with her mountains, continents, oceans, lakes, and islands; the flowers that throw out their perfume on the vernal air; the furious blasts of winter; the roseate, purple, golden clouds of sunrise and sunset; the constellations sweeping in grandeur across the firmament; the mote in the sunbeam; the Alpine summit crowned with eternal snow; the loftiest tree and the humblest blade of grass; all natural objects and laws whatever, are but mediators between God and man—channels through which He is pleased to communicate to us, in constant and copious streams, the emanations of his own incomprehensible life, bliss, beauty, and perfections. And in these ever-varying, innumerable forms of the divine beneficence, there is quite as much mystery as in the dispensations of grace recorded in the Sacred Writings.

The department of moral life furnishes affecting displays of the same principle. Over the babe just ushered into the world so speechless, feeble, and destitute, there impend hunger, cold, disease, and premature death. The nurse and attendants are the propitious agents, who receive the little stranger on the vestibule of life, and, by a series of mediatorial offices most beautiful to think of, secure its preservation and advancement. It soon becomes a promising boy—the pride and hope of fond, doat-

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ing parents. The father, preceptors, preacher, counsellors, and companions are some of the mediators who conspire together to discipline his opening intellect; to form his taste and character; to awaken in his bosom a consciousness of God, rectitude, and immortality.

The blessings of science are bestowed in the same way. Take arithmetic as an instance, without whose aid none of our secular pursuits could be carried forward. Who created it? Has it not flowed to us through the labors and wisdom of a long line of illustrious benefactors? The same remark is applicable to every branch of knowledge and philosophy. There are mediators with respect to all the productions of art; the house in which you live; that piano on which your daughters play so delightfully; all the institutes and instruments of individual, domestic, social, agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing enterprise. Thus by mediation we are born, educated, prepared for our respective missions in life; and find at last a shroud, a coffin, a funeral, and a tomb. Why, then, should the doctrine be thought incredible, that God has ordained Jesus to be a supernatural mediator, by whose interposition we are rescued from sin and error, and enriched with all those endowments requisite to fit us for an approaching eternity? It is in entire harmony with all which we know of God's ways in the physical universe. And in Nature, as I shall have occasion to show in the sequel, there are quite as many stupendous miracles as in the department of grace. And if God employs miracles to effect our temporal welfare, it is in keeping with his unfathomable, universal, eternal wisdom, to make use of them in accomplishing our higher spiritual and immortal well-being.

Again, it is objected that all of the works of Nature are impartial, and beneficial alike to every class and

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individual of mankind, but, according to the usual representations of the pulpit, the miracles of Christ, instead of being a benefit to the whole race, will prove an unspeakable calamity to countless millions, for all who do not exercise faith in these miracles before they die will perish everlastingly. I reply to this monstrous dogma that it is neither taught by Jesus nor his apostles. It is found only in those theological systems which have been invented by uninspired men. I believe in the entire New Testament. The Son of God himself asserts that the Father sent him into the world to save *all sinners* without a single exception; that he came to lay down his life a ransom for *all men*, and that not one of those for whom he died can be finally and forever lost. He who said, "*Father forgive them*," will not discard and ruin any of those for whom his blood was shed, because they are obstinate, unbelieving, sinful, and foolish. Paul declares that Jesus will sit upon his mediatorial throne till every sinful mind, whether in this or the spirit world, shall be converted, redeemed, sanctified, and introduced to the glories of an everlasting life. Repeatedly we are assured, that every child of Adam who dies sinful and polluted, will, in some unrevealed epoch of a coming eternity, be admitted to that immortal land where will be no death, sin, nor suffering through the unwasting ages of an endless duration.

Why, in a work recently put forth by one of the ablest defenders of a limited atonement in the United States, it is estimated that now there are ten hundred millions of inhabitants on our globe. Of these, the calculation made by the same author, supposes that not more, on an average, than one out of a hundred thousand will ever see the kingdom of heaven. What is the mediation of Christ worth, if such are to be its insignificant results? Did the angels who sang that hymn to the shepherds of

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Bethlehem, on the eve of Jesus's nativity, tell the truth when they said, "Behold we bring you glad tidings of great joy, *which shall be to all people?*" Glad tidings, that for every one who is raised to heaven, ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine are sent to the regions of eternal woe? This is a plan of mediation over which demons might rejoice; it is so dreadful, gloomy, repulsive, and diabolical; but it cannot appear beauteous in the sight of those immaculate spirits who, as our Saviour assures us, tune their golden harps to strains of seraphic praise to celebrate the return of a single sinner to the bosom and embrace of an infinite Father. I would sooner preach downright Atheism than stand in the pulpit as the advocate of some poor, jejune, mean, meagre, exclusive, narrow, theological scheme of redemption, whose awful ultimatum will be but a mere fraction of mankind saved, and all the remainder consigned to the wailings of everlasting perdition. I am aware that good and sincere men have been, and are still engaged in urging the claims of this forbidding and satanic faith.

Paul tells us that good men, whose hearts are right before God, may be found among idolaters. And it is plain to me that faith in the chimerical mythologies and fabulous traditions of Paganism is not a thousandth part as hurtful as a belief in the vile, blasphemous doctrine of endless woe. Our religious periodicals, as well as sermons, are filled with glowing, impassioned declamation concerning the evils of intemperance, slavery, and infidelity; but all these combined are not doing as much hurt to the bodies and souls of men as the single heathenish doctrine of Almighty wrath. Those ministers who teach, that because some men are low, fallen, debased, and unholy at the moment of death, they will be forever lost, have not yet learned

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the alphabet of the Christian religion. Sin is never remunerated by God with vengeance, either here or hereafter.

Jesus assures us that the Father does not *hate* the wicked, but simply their wickedness; that he will bring to bear upon them the power of infinite gentleness, the all-subduing influence of his pity, and the might of his boundless love through Christ, till they will finally be raised to penitence, faith, wisdom, sanctity, glory—raised to the enjoyment of that ineffable bliss which unchanging, omnipotent, and boundless love has provided for our present and never-ending welfare. There is not a member of the human family, past present, or to come, who will not receive everlasting and immeasurable benefits from the miracles recorded in the gospels. Like the sun, air, rain, and all Nature, they bestow their blessings, not upon a part of mankind only, but on the entire race.

The Rationalists of our day, although they deny the miracles, profess to be great admirers of the New Testament. They call it one of the most wise, holy, beautiful, and instructive works which the world has ever seen, with respect to the grandest themes of human thought—God, providence, duty, and our everlasting destiny beyond the grave. Further, they admit that Jesus and his apostles were upright, truth-telling men, that they most conscientiously believed in the correctness of the statements which they have made. The Son of God said to the unbelieving Jews:—"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' Jesus saith unto him, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that

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hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, then, show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "When John sent two of his disciples, and asked, saying, 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?' Jesus answered and said unto them, 'Go and show John the things which ye do hear and see; how that the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them.'"

In these and numerous other places, Jesus appeals to the superhuman works which he performed as his distinguishing credentials; so that his works of divine power demonstrated the divine authority of his teachings. If our Saviour did not work miracles, then in all his public discourses he uttered falsehood and blasphemy. Now, in view of the argument just named, I say to the Rationalists, be consistent. There is no middle ground between the two alternatives presented; whichever of them you may choose, it is equally conclusive against you. From the dilemma into which you have been brought by your own reasonings, no resources of art, skill, logic, genius, critical acumen, or eloquence can extricate you. If you deny that Jesus was an impostor, you must grant the reality of his miracles. I have heard a minister in Boston, whose reputation for learning is very great, deny the miraculous power of Christ. In the same discourse he asserted that Jesus was a very good man—a sincere, noble, generous, high-minded Hebrew youth, of the most brilliant intellectual and moral accomplishments—a light, charm, ornament, and blessing to humanity, whose lustre would shine undimmed through all the ages of time. It is impossible for me to imagine

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how Jesus could be even a good man, unless we admit his claims to being endowed with supernatural power. To say that any man of fair, natural powers, now living, may become a Jesus, by far-reaching and comprehensive attainments of knowledge and moral excellence, is a puerility which, it seems to me, no sound, philosophical mind could advance. If intellectual and moral training is adequate to endow any human mind with those extraordinary gifts and powers which Jesus possessed, how is it to be explained, that our world has hitherto seen but one Christ—only one visible representative of the living God on earth—only one image of his boundless perfections; his active, universal, and benevolent providence; his paternal, unfailing, infinite love and kindness to our fallen, afflicted, and unhappy race? Upon the theory of the Rationalists, every household, almost every church, and every neighborhood in our land should have a Jesus in it. And Boston, the Goshen of the United States, should be absolutely filled with them."

"To say that Jesus Christ was but a common man, and rose to his sublime eminence through application to study in the ordinary way as a lover of learning, and by remarkable attainments of holiness, is simply to set aside the Christian record, and introduce another Jesus. When his kinsfolks and the acquaintances of his youth heard his teachings and saw his mighty works, knowing that he was not learned in the sense of the schools, they were astonished, and said, 'Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?' And whence, indeed, *had* he all these things? It is plain, then, that the only Jesus whom we, as Christians, know, or can know—the Christ of Christian history—is the IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US. The primitive Christian church was built upon the name of *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by signs and miracles, which*

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God wrought among the people by him. Being sent into the world to manifest to the children of men the presence and power of God, miraculous energies were given him to be his, as our ordinary powers are our own. As we can perform our ordinary works, so he could speak health to the sick, and even life to the dead. His own testimony is, 'thus, as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son also to have life in himself.' He hath a power and an energy of life to communicate the vital flame to the cold remains of the dead. Through him, then, we attain a conscious nearness to God, a filial affection for him, and a child-like, peaceful confidence in him, which could never have been imparted to us by any other means."—(S. Cobb.)

"Once more, it is affirmed that the miracles of the New Testament are useless, because their authors have communicated to the world no new ideas or truths concerning the practical duties of religion and morality. The miracles are barren phenomena fitted only to awaken the wonder of an ignorant, gaping crowd like the arts of conjuration, legerdemain or mesmerism, which have been practiced in all ages, and in all countries, both barbarous and civilized. The precepts of Jesus, (the only valuable parts of the gospel) had been put forth in some form or other by law-givers, poets, prophets and sages, many of whom lived a thousand years before the birth of Christ."

In the reply, I am compelled to deny the fact that Jesus has given us no new ideas or truths on the subject of religion. I have been familiar with Deistical writers, from my boyish days. At one time, just before entering Yale College, I was quite enamored of these productions. I read with attention, Lord Herbert, Hobbes, Shaftesbury, Tindall, Morgan, Bolingbroke, Hume, Voltaire, Volney, Thomas Paine, Mirabeau's Laws of Nature, &c. Each of these

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writers undertakes to describe those religious doctrines which are derived from the light of Nature, and which furnish a complete proof that mankind do not need a supernatural revelation. It is to me self-evident, that what these learned, and I doubt not sincere men, call Natural Religion, has been borrowed, perhaps, unconsciously from the Bible. Now, indeed, that our whole duty is clearly put forth in the Sacred Scriptures, we are enabled not only to see its entire harmony with reason, but also to employ reason in deducing its obligations from the light of nature; but if mankind had never been favored with a supernatural revelation, it would have been impossible for them to have ascertained the way of truth and honor on many subjects intimately connected with their highest temporal, and eternal happiness. It is *one* thing to perceive that the rules of life, which are laid down in the Bible are in accordance with reason, and quite *another* thing to discover those rules by a legitimate process of reasoning and discussion, conducted by the mere light of nature.

"I admit that in Deistical books we find some of the principles contained in the Bible, but clouds and shadows rest upon them. Now Jesus Christ separated these principles from the mass of errors, contradictions and corruptions, with which the wisdom of the world had alloyed and obscured them; embodied them in a perfect system, and vitalized them by the energy and power of a *living* example. Besides the great doctrine of divine love—love not as a return of benefits received, but as a spirit of good will to universal being—the doctrine of love even to the bitterest enemies, overcoming evil with good—this he brought out, and gave such a prominence in his system of morals, as to make in fact a new doctrine in the world. Did Confucius, Socrates, Plato, Seneca, or Cicero inculcate anything like the beatitudes laid down in the Sermon on the Mount?

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"But, suppose that a few profound scholars and philosophers were capable, by a long course of diligent and painful application, to demonstrate some of the leading principles of ethical science, what just rules of life could the ignorant masses, with no opportunities of study, and no aid from books, have found out on a thousand interesting questions, clearly solved in the Bible, had they been left alone to the light of nature, and to be cheated by the blind impulse of animal appetites and passions, "in wandering mazes lost?" But here stands the accredited ambassador of God — of him who made us, and who constituted all our desires, wants and relations — of him to whom we are accountable, and in whose hand are our lives and destinies — here he stands with the credentials of his divine commission, and speaking *from* God and *for* God, he tells us what is our duty, and bids us do it. It is the communication of the *creating* to the *created* mind. It is decisive authority, and we are filled with a reverence for it as Jehovah's counsel. And then temptations may assail us, and the syren voice of worldly policy may allure — but here is the word which the Son of God hath spoken, this is the infallible standard of right, and we will mind it. And we know that where God's counsel lead us, his blessing shall be with us. In this point of view we have the revelation of Jesus to his moral precepts. He brings them to us clothed with Divine authority and infallible truth. He inspires us with reverence for, and confidence in them, to know that, in circumstances most adverse to human policy, our obedience to the law of Christ shall yet conduce to the greatest good." (S. Cobb.)

When we read the advice and recommendations of those men who posessed only the light of nature, we feel at liberty to adopt or reject them as we choose. But the injunctions of Jesus come to us

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clothed with an authority which we dare not disobey, because we know from his works, "that he speaketh the words of God, that God hath not given the Spirit by measure unto him; that he came from heaven, and is above all, and what he hath seen and heard from God, he testifieth." "When we look upon the works of Christ we feel, that although they are the works of a *man* in every sense essential to us as an example of purity and benevolence, yet, at the same time we are compelled to acknowledge that they are superhuman — the works of *God*. If it be asked, of what consequence to us is this fact, I would reply, it enables us to feel that when we work the works of love, and do good to the children of men, *we imitate God and become identified with him*. It is a blessed consciousness, a sweet perception, an ennobling thought! And this is not all. It enables us to see what is *the disposition of God toward us as sinners*. When we contemplate Jesus in his labors of love in the world, love to all, both friends and foes; when we trace him to the Cross, and hear his dying prayer, and see him seal with his blood his changeless benevolence to our race — beholding here the presence and the spirit of God, we know that God is the friend of man — that he would be willing to die for us, if it were possible and necessary to effect our salvation — that in all worlds, in time and eternity, he will love all his intelligent creatures, and accomplish their final and everlasting good. Now these supporting assurances rest entirely on the supernatural manifestations which Christ made of the being, wisdom, and love of the eternal Father, of the duties which we owe to God, and to one another, and the certainty of a future state of bliss for man beyond the grave." (S. Cobb).

"Take away the supernatural feature of his mission, and we destroy the historical Christ of the New Testament. Deny the miraculous in his char-

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acter and works, and you take away his *authority* as the infallible teacher of the ultimate religion. Even the grandeur of his moral life is thus destroyed, for when you carve out all his works which are recorded as miraculous, there is but a dim speck left, even of the *life* of Jesus. And if you find *anything* left of his works, there is no exhibit in them of the Father, nothing to inspire reverence and truthfulness, more than there is in every good deed which we see performed around us. And thus do we reduce Jesus as a moral teacher, to a level with the Gentile philosophers — nay, lower — we make him either a Jewish impostor, or a weak-minded enthusiast — either *dishonestly pretending* to works he never did, or else *thinking* that he could do wonders which he had no power to perform." (S. Cobb's discourse on the Mission and Authority of Christ).

Yes, take away the miracles of Christ, and the New Testament in a moment would be stripped of its distinctive and most shining glories — the outward world would become dark and cheerless — the universe would be, to my eye, disrobed of its splendors and we should be like stars struck from their orbits, wandering in the regions of space and night, without harmony, attraction, and destination or end. We might, indeed, even then, feel certain that there was a great First Cause — a great Moving Power of the physical universe — that has called us into existence and spread around us these scenes of ineffable beauty and gladness, but we never could have known without the light of the Gospel, that God is our immutable, omnipotent friend, and that he will certainly accomplish our forgiveness, reformation, holiness and everlasting life. It is by the miracles only, that we are made certain that God can never hate, despise, forget, injure or destroy the children of men — that by no misconduct is it possible to alienate his affections from us. Without his abso-

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lute assurance, we should be devoid of hope in the world. We should have no outward material prop to lean upon; no inward reliance; no adequate object for our ever-expanding affections; no asylum to betake ourselves to in want, sickness, sorrow, persecution or death.

But the Rationalists take the bold position, that a real miracle is an absolute impossibility. "No evidence of any kind," they say, "no human testimony however strong, can substantiate a reported fact, whose existence obviously implies a violation of the eternal, immutable laws of nature. If all the inhabitants of London, or Boston, should testify that they saw a person rise from the dead, this testimony would be idle, because the alleged fact is contrary to the laws of nature, and therefore no such thing ever did, nor can occur."

Surely this is taking strong ground. But has any proof been adduced to establish the correctnèss of such a doctrine? None that I have seen. I do not concur with those divines who define a miracle by saying that it is "an event, or effect contrary to the established constitution and course of things, or a violation of the known laws of nature." But I consider a miracle an event which is *super*natural, that is, an effect of some law lying outside of human knowledge, and obviously coming from the supreme, infinite Intelligence. Yet no one can prove that it is not within the compass of Almighty power to suspend a known law of nature, with reference to a particular emergency, without interfering in the slightest degree with the orderly, harmonious, and beneficent course of events throughout the universe generally. He who made the laws of nature is superior to them, and can if he chooses, oppose, suspend or modify them. The Almighty Parent certainly could cause water not to drown, nor fire to burn in a single house in Boston, at the same time

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that these elements in every other part of the city operated in their usual manner. To say that it is a thing which even God could not do, is a most barefaced, and gratuitous assumption.

Can any mortal say with propriety, "I know there are no natural laws in the universe adequate to the production of those miracles recorded in the New Testament?" I cannot imagine a declaration more absurd and atrocious. Is man's feeble intellect able to fathom the deep ocean of Divine wonders? Are there no truths lying beyond the remotest boundaries of our mental horizon? Shall we make our limited reason the measure of universal knowledge, and our poor narrow experience the standard of all that is possible throughout the immensity of creation? We do not know all the natural laws of the simplest objects around us. We have not yet found out all the natural laws of air, earth, water, light, heat, electricity, magnetism, life, or death; nor of our own bodies, a tree, a flower, the lifting of a hand, walking, nor the articulate sounds which convey the thoughts and feelings of a speaker through the viewless atmosphere, to the bosoms of his audience. For aught we can say to the contrary, the theory of the Rev. Mr. Furness, of Philadelphia may be true: "that if my mind were simply freed from all sin, made perfectly holy, there is a law in my nature which would, in that case, enable me by a touch, or a word, to restore the blind to sight, the deaf to hearing, make the lame to walk, or raise the dead."

These would be, perhaps, little more wonderful than the well-known facts of mesmerism, now received as true by all scientific men throughout the world. Some years ago there was no natural law known in Siam adequate to the formation of ice. Its inhabitants had never heard of the congelation of water, and when English missionaries told the

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king of that land, that the surface of the rivers sometimes became solid in Great Britain, they were regarded and treated as impudent liars and unprincipled deceivers. A scientific gentleman in New York, says, in regard to modern Spiritualism, "that some of its phenomena cannot be denied, and that when they shall have been thoroughly explored, it will be found, simply and only, that a new page of natural science has been turned over. The Spiritualists think the celestial spheres have intersected the orbit of this world, and let in new light upon us. *We* believe that men are finding out some physical laws that have always existed, and been variously active, but which have hitherto been unknown to science." Man will never be able this side the grave to sound the depths of psychology — that is, all the laws which reign over our immortal spirits. The Rationalists, without an exception, believe that there is a law, which, when the body dies, will keep the soul alive, and carry it forward upon the line of an existence that will never terminate. This in reality, implies as great a miracle, as any which we read of in the New Testament. Every man believes in miracles. He cannot help it any more than he can help believing in the existence of the sun. The man who denies their possibility assumes virtually, that he is omniscient and infinite — that he can tell, on abstract principles, everything which it is in the power of God to perform.

I repeat the remark, everybody believes in miracles. Geology has proved that the earth on which we tread, with its tribes of plants and animals of every order, ascending in a beautiful scale of perfection, has come to its present state by a slow process of improvement, which has been going on no one knows how long. Researches into its structure prove, that before it was brought out of the chaos mentioned in the 1st chapter of Genesis, it had

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been already more than once inhabited and destroyed. It is fact, it is science, it is certainty that the dust we trample under our feet was once animated life. From the deepest and most rocky foundations of the globe, up to the loftiest summits of mountain ranges, there is one unbroken succession of graves. There is not a particle of matter belonging to the vegetable and animal departments, which has not lived and died times innumerable, and through unknown, unreckoned lapse of duration, before the human race began to be. A great naturalist has said, "that such a globe as ours could never be made except by constant successions of life and death. Moreover, Geology teaches that when the innumerable antecedent periods, or epochs of the world's history began, the old inhabitants, whether plants or animals, were successively destroyed, and new ones of different nature, of a higher and more perfect organization, were introduced to act their parts, for a time, on this strange theatre of being. At length, these shared the fate of their predecessors, and retired to mingle forever with the elements whence they were taken, and to be followed by new, higher, and nobler races than any which had gone before. Man, the most perfect of all creatures on earth has existed but a few thousand years.

Further, it is proved by geology, that the first of each new genus or species of living things was not produced by any of the genera or species that preceded it, but was literally a new creation not resolvable into any laws or influences, that existed previously. For example, it is granted that the human race had a beginning — that this beginning was miraculous or supernatural; for the first man and woman were never babies, had no father or mother. Here then is a miracle which no infidel even, denies: it is a matter of universal faith. The same remark

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is applicable to all the tribes of plants and animals now flourishing on earth. There was a time when they had no existence. Their introduction into life was a supernatural event — a creation effected by the direct agency of the omnipotent one. If all the objects of the physical world began in miracles, why should it be deemed incredible that Christianity should have had a supernatural origin? God from eternity has been working miracles, if he is the Creator of all things.

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." "Here we have the purpose of Christ's mission most clearly explained. It was designed that mankind should be enabled to see and feel, by the manifestation of God in his Messiah, (God with us), that he is not merely force — the great moving power of the physical world, without a mind; and also that he is not a mere over-looking mind, which originally planned and acted once in the production of the world, and then left it to be governed ever since by established laws, without further concern of his own, and without moral affections or active interests, and ever-present sympathy for his children. Although God has seen fit as the best plan adopted to the present state of man, to subject our common interests to fixed and uniform laws in the constitution of things, that we might calculate for ourselves the relation between cause and effect, yet he who had the power to establish these laws for our good, can extend to us the witness of himself, and the favors of his love, without their aid, when he has a special and sufficient reason for so doing. He does not contradict those laws, but he manifests himself in Christ as behind and above them, and as able and willing to work also by other means for the good of his children, whenever his wisdom shall choose it as best."

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"The Rationalists, therefore, rest their cause upon two assumptions. First, the Almighty Parent cannot suspend the established laws of the physical universe in order to commune with the children of men, and bestow upon them peculiar blessings. Secondly, there are no fixed natural laws in the universal creation, adequate to the production of those events recorded in the New Testament, which are called miraculous. Upon this theory those laws which God has made, are an over-match for himself, or what is the same thing, in this case, creatures are more potent than their Creator. He cannot change, modify nor interfere with them in any way, nor pass them by, nor oppose them, nor act without their aid, even if he is ever so desirous of doing it. As was before asked, Can the finite grasp and comprehend the infinite? Yet, the argument which I am considering implies this possibility. The truth is, that what are called the laws of nature are merely the modes in which God is pleased to put forth his energies, and he can at any moment change them with the same ease with which he said in the beginning, 'Let there be light: and there was light.'"

The accounts of the miracles contained in the Gospels have been scrutinized and dissected word by word, in numerous volumes written by the skeptical critics of Europe and the United States, for the last thirty years. They have discovered many verbal differences and contradictions in the statements of the Evangelists, which, as they allege, are a complete refutation of their genuineness and authenticity. I once perused a translation of the celebrated Strauss. I have looked at the leading arguments of his coadjutors on this side the water. I will give as strong an example, I believe, as any which could be adduced, of those discrepancies, which it is affirmed, are sufficient to destroy the credibility of the Gospels in the judgment of all sound, impartial, and enlightened scholars.

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It is found that Matthew describes the healing of a certain leper, as having taken place when Christ was entering the city of Capernaum, while Mark and Luke represent it as occurring after he left that place. One Evangelist mentions that a *demoniac* was healed on a certain occasion, another says *demoniacs* — differingly only in this; one uses the singular number, the other the plural. In the account of the resurrection of Jesus, one historian says that the women came to the sepulchre while it was yet *dark;* another that they came at *dawn*, and yet another says at *sunrise.* These are as good samples as can be found, perhaps, of the alleged discrepancies which should lead us to repudiate the Gospels. In reply to such reasoning, the Rev. Mr. Thayer, in his work on Infidelity, makes the following remarks:

"If these statements were absolutely irreconcilable as to verbal differences, it does not follow that the events which they relate did not take place. For it is a rule laid down in every scientific treatise on testimony, that diversity of evidence as to the *incidentals* of a fact, so far from proving the fact untrue, increases its probability. Smooth, rounded stories, each tallying with the other in every particular, present an aspect of fabrication. If the testimony of the Evangelists had harmonized exactly as to all the minutest circumstances, this fact might have been urged as presumptive evidence of concert and collusion. Men never see things precisely alike in all particulars. Two witnesses in a court of justice of the highest veracity, in testifying to an undoubted fact which happened in their presence, will still differ as to incidental facts. Suppose it relate to a personal encounter between A and B, in which the latter was killed. One witness affirms that A commenced the assault, the other is equally positive that B struck the first blow. But this dif-

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ference does not in the least invalidate their testimony, for both concur in asserting that the two men quarrelled, and that one of them was killed. So, in the cases above mentioned, the discrepancies in the Evangelists do not impair their credibility, but just the reverse establishes it upon an immovable basis."

"Stretch any history," says Mr. Thayer, "upon the same rack, and apply to it the same reasoning, and there is not a single narrative of ancient or modern times, which would not be resolved into a fiction, or a myth. Take for example the history of Alexander the Great. One biographer asserts that he reigned twelve years, another thirteen, another thirty-five. Now, according to the Rationalists' mode of arguing, we must conclude that the illustrious Macedonian never lived excepting in a myth. In the same way we can prove that all which is told us about Julius Cæsar, or any other distinguished man of earlier or later times, is nothing but romance. Milton never lived; Shakspeare never lived; Washington never lived, carrying out the requisitions above mentioned, and all historical documents must be given up and stamped as forgeries."

> "Are these the pompous tidings ye proclaim,
> Lights of the world, and demagogues of fame."

One historian says that Gen. Warren was engaged in the battle of Bunker Hill, another of equal reputation asserts that he was not on the ground at all. According to these profound critics, what is the inference to be legitimately drawn from this discrepancy? Why, that there was no such battle ever fought. All accounts of it handed down to us are *myths*. This would be just as reasonable as to argue, that because the accounts of miracles in the Gospels differ as to unimportant incidentals, therefore those miracles were never performed, the narratives

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of them must be regarded as fabulous. In determining whether a history ought to be received as credible, learned men have agreed upon a certain standard whereby to test its truth. No fictitious history can bear this test. I wish there was room to describe it. It may be found in a little work called Leslie's Short Method with the Deist. Its application is as definite and unerring as the multiplication table, or the laws of trigonometry. We may apply it to all the historical documents extant, and discriminate with certainty between the real and fictitious. Indeed, no arguments in behalf of any profane history, are half as strong as those which substantiate the narratives of Scripture. This is granted by every scholar in the world. Why then does he not accept these narratives? Simply because they imply what is supernatural. So do all the natural sciences. No man can consistently receive the established facts of Astronomy, Zoology, Mineralogy, Geology or Botany without believing in the supernatural.

To me there is nothing so strange, or unaccountable, in the New Testament, as the assertion of astronomers, that this ponderous globe, nearly eight thousand miles in diameter, and twenty-five thousand in circumference, moves in its annual path around the sun more than sixty thousand miles every hour, and at the same time spins on its axis about a thousand miles an hour. But it is said these stupendous phenomena admit an easy explanation. They are the result of the great law of gravitation by which all bodies are attracted to each other. But what does the word *attraction* in this case signify? Sir Isaac Newton could not answer this question. He tells us that attraction is only the name of an unknown cause of which we have no other knowledge than that it depends on the will of God. Who can limit this will? Who can say, upon

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abstract principles, that it could not give a miraculous birth to a human being, like that in the New Testament ascribed to the Son of God? It seems to me blasphemous to assert that the Almighty One could not confer upon Jesus those extraordinary powers which the Gospels affirm that he possessed.

Up to the present day I have not been able to find a valid argument against the extraordinary works that attest the divine authority of Jesus. The weapons which Deists generally use are exclamations like the following: "*Believe in the supernatural! Nonsense!* Folly! Wretched superstition! It is as plain as a sun-beam that there never was, and never can be such a thing as a miracle in our world. It is high time to give up *old wives' fables*, and settle down upon the self-evident principles of a pure, beautiful, consistent, Natural Religion." And all this is said with an air of gravity and wisdom, quite sufficient to put to the blush the simple, plain, and unlearned believer in the Son of God.

But in spite of all opposition, the miracles still exist. They have lost none of their original might and beauty. Celestial glory beams around them. Bars, bolts, dungeons, bonds, tortures, death, learning, wit, ridicule, and sophistry have often tried in vain to extinguish their influence. But they still live, and, thank Heaven, are destined to live "long as the earth bears a plant, or the sea rolls a wave."

Suppose we were to rid the world of every particle of faith in the Christian miracles, what good results could such an achievement accomplish? I have often proposed this question to those who are kindly laboring to free men's minds from the dominion of the supernatural. The invariable answer has been: "In no other way can we put an end to the numerous forms of error and superstition which fill the world with doubts, gloom, sorrow, and darkness."

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To this I reply, that, take away Jesus and his miracles, what panoply should we have against the most aggravated assaults of credulity and fanaticism? Here we are drifting down the "mist-wrapped stream of time," and without the teachings of Jesus we know not who we are, whence we came, or whither we are going. Blot out the light of miracles, then we could not tell whether we are in the hands of a Father, or under the control of demons; we should not know but that before another day closed, we might be called to lie down in the same ditch with the brute to exist no more; or according to Pythagoras breathe out our spirits, that we might be metamorphosed into a horse, mule, dog, bird, fish, insect, or some of the vegetable tribes. This luminary of Pagan wisdom, we read, was afraid to eat any of the leguminous plants, lest he might be swallowing the souls of departed friends and relatives. Take away the Gospel, we do not know but Calvinism is true, and that death will conduct us to an eternity of unimaginable and ever-increasing anguish. Then, the destroying of faith in the miracles, would unsettle the basis of Christian morals. What without them would be left to guide mankind in the paths of peace? The ethical codes promulgated by uninspired men are various, contradictory, fluctuating and uncertain. One denies the essential difference between virtue and vice. Another advocates the unlimited, unrestrained enjoyment and gratification of the animal appetites and passions. A third maintains that self-denial, self-mortification, humility and forgiveness are not virtues, but useless and mischievous — tending to stupify the intellect, sour the temper, and harden the heart. But the morality sanctioned by Christian miracles is ever the same: intelligible to every mind; cheerful and joyous; prompting to no deeds but those of piety, purity and benevolence; strict in its demands, yet

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merciful; fitted to beings of an earthly mould, yet of an immortal destiny.

If hope in Jesus and his miracles be a delusion, let it never be dispelled from my bosom. Rob me, if it must be so, of property, health, reputation and friends, but leave me, O, leave me the consolations of the Gospel. Byron was a strong-minded man, with all his sins and follies. In a letter to a clergyman he says, "I would give more for a firm Christian hope, than all the wealth, fame and pleasures of earth: for it is the only thing that has power to make me happy here; and though I may be finally doomed to annihilation, I shall, at least, never know that I have been mocked." So I would say, let me harbor this hope among my strongest affections and fancy, as I travel through this vale of tears, that I look out upon the fascinating perspective of a future life, rising in all the glories of immortality from the dark ruins of earth and time, where the skeptic sees only darkness, confusion, nonentity, gloom, and despair.

It is a prevailing sentiment that Unitarians in the United States do not fully comprehend nor appreciate the perfections and glories of Jesus Christ. But we profess to receive as true everything which the New Testament teaches on these topics. We take the liberty to reject those theories in regard to the philosophical nature and relations of the Father and the Son, not sanctioned by reason and the Word of God. To us there is no significance in the Gospel apart from the life of Jesus. We prize beyond all comparison the fact expressed in John 1 : 14— "And the Word was manifested in flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.") Without the illumination of Christ, to us the moral world would be disrobed of virtue, faith, and charity. Take away Jesus, and the charm of

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existence would set to rise no more. We should become mere animals — hopeless and aimless wanderers through the regions of space and night. Take away Jesus and you blot out even the hope of immortality, and we should be poor, fearful, trembling orphans, cast out upon a wide, bleak, boundless waste, destitute, deserted, and ready to perish. But by the mission of Jesus it is made certain that we are not acting our parts in a fatherless and forsaken universe. Now, it is known that we are the children of God. "The blood of martyrdom is precious, but to us the blood of Jesus is the blood of a holier sacrifice; that of divine innocence pleading for a guilty world," — "*the blood of a lamb without spot and blemish, slain from the foundation of the world.*"

We know of no Christ but the Christ of the New Testament, who testified by miracles, that his origin was divine, and that his doctrines came from God. The Unitarians most firmly believe in the Trinity as taught by Jesus and Paul, while they reject the doctrine of scholastic theology that there are three Gods in one. They teach that God has revealed himself through his universal Fatherhood, through his Redeeming Son, and through his sanctifying Spirit. The Trinitarians blend the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit together. The Unitarians can no more consider the Jesus of Nazareth as in all respects equal to the eternal Jehovah, because God was revealed through him, than they could adopt the Pantheistic error of confounding God with Nature, by and through which his invisible attributes have been made known.

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CHAPTER V.

THOUGHTS ON THE SUBJECT OF SIN.

WHAT do the Scriptures mean by the word sin? Simply a wrong action. The first instance of sin mentioned in the Bible is the feelings and conduct of Cain with respect to his brother Abel. We read as follows: "And the Lord said unto Cain, why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou *doest well*, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou *doest not well*, sin lieth at the door." No different definition of sin from this can be found in the Sacred Writings. The numerous texts touching this point are so generally known, and so often quoted, that it is unnecessary to produce them.

The above description of sin is as plain as words can convey. It is just as intelligible as the terms earth, water, air, fire, sky, ocean, rivers, trees, flowers, an apple, orange, cherry, or peach. Yet theologians in general, represent it to be a profound and inexplicable mystery. I remember, when a child, to have heard a man of the highest reputation for his piety, use the following words in conversation: He said, "that his heart was a profound, fathomless abyss of depravity; that he verily believed there was not, in the sight of God, a worse person on earth than himself; that he had in his own nature no more ability to perform an evangelically good action than he had to make a world; and that if strict justice were meted out to him, he

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should deserve for the sin contained in the holiest prayer he had ever made, to suffer an eternal punishment in the world of perdition."

Now, I knew that this man was regarded as one of the most pure, amiable, useful, and unoffending persons living in my native village. His language, therefore, was in my view perfectly incomprehensible. After the company was dispersed, I asked my father for an explanation. What does he mean, I anxiously inquired, by calling himself the most wicked man in the world? Is he, indeed, worse than that neighbor of ours (mentioning his name) who for his crimes has been confined in the State Prison? He replied thus: "My son, you do not understand the subject of sin. The gentleman was not speaking of his outward actions which have been quite exemplary and excellent, but of those abominations of his heart, that no mortal eye can see. You must be born again in order to be capable of realizing that your spiritual character is infinitely odious in the sight of Heaven, and deserving of his eternal reprobation." In accordance with these sentiments, I was uniformly taught that I could not feel my sinfulness, and look upon it with godly sorrow and true penitence until I had experienced a change of heart. This change I was solemnly assured could be effected only by the arbitrary, supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit, that I was utterly unable to bring it about by my own endeavors, however honestly and perseveringly employed. Everywhere, during my childhood and youth, in the nursery, the school and the church, the sentiment was inculcated upon me that human nature, in consequence of an innate, necessary, and total corruption, was incapable of leading a life in conformity with truth and rectitude.

I believe that my father, who held and taught this doctrine to his children, is a truly good man—

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a humble and sincere Christian. For there are hardly any delusions that prevail in the world on religious topics to which the sincere and true-hearted may not be enslaved by ignorance, authority, fashion, and the almost irresistible influence of parental example and early training. The people inhabiting that part of New England where I was born, not excepting the clergy, though generally intelligent, enterprising, and industrious, were hard, dry, and stern Calvinists. Their peculiar faith breathed a spirit as unlike Christianity as possible. "One is all love and tenderness, the other all bitterness and denunciation; the one is gentle and tolerant, the other fierce and intolerant; the one careless of forms, so that the life and soul of charity are preserved, the other is all form and doctrine—doctrine harsh, metaphysical, rigid, and damnatory." The sermons to which I listened were dry, dull, cold disquisitions on abstract and speculative dogmas, unrelieved by any refinements of polite literature, or allusions to the beautiful, sublime objects and scenes of nature, human life, and civilized society. The delivery of these homilies was as unattractive as their matter was repulsive. The ministers had a gravity of manner which was so unvaried—so devoid of nature, warmth, and sympathy with their hearers, as to be absolutely chilling, deadening, and oppressive.

I repeat it, these clergymen were pious, hard-working men; but of all the beautiful sayings and doings of Jesus, of all the rich consolations which he brought down from heaven to support and strengthen the afflicted and unhappy, of all the deeds and expressions of a Father's boundless love that shone in his life and character, they dealt out nothing to us. Sunday after Sunday, year after year, our thirsty, yearning souls received nothing but the constant asseverations, that we were the

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object of God's infinite wrath, that we were dead in trespasses and sins, that we had no power to raise ourselves from the depths of ruin to spiritual light and holiness, and that without such an exaltation this side the grave, we should be forever lost.

The greatest and most predominant error with respect to sin is that we are born with a corrupt, sinful nature. *Man has a depraved nature!* To me it is plain there never was, there never can be, a sinful nature in this or any other part of the boundless universe. For the nature of any finite existence—be it sun, moon, stars, earth, water, plants, animals, man, or anything else which can be named—has been made by God himself. But the Bible affirms that every object or being which the Creator has formed is good, and only good. Every catechism used in the Christian world teaches that our nature is the work of our Heavenly Father. To assert, then, that it is sinful, virtually impeaches his moral perfections. Besides, it involves a most glaring absurdity. It implies or supposes that sin, which is an effect, is the cause of itself.

Again, this fallacy tends directly to subvert the doctrine of man's accountability. It casts the darkness of a wide-spread, necessary, eternal evil on the moral prospects of our misguided, erring, and afflicted race. Because, if man's nature is sinful, then worldliness and vice — then the most deplorable and dreadful crimes are nothing more than the acting out of the principles of that moral constitution which God has given us—nothing more than a natural, and inevitable conformity to a divine law. Indeed, I have often heard bad people, who were giving themselves up to the unrestrained indulgence of guilty passions, deliberately trampling upon the most sacred dictates of reason, conscience, and honor, excuse themselves by the plea that they could not be to blame, for they were only gratifying

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their natural propensities, and following the behests of Providence.

To obviate this reasoning, it is contended that, admitting God gave to man, originally, a good nature, yet our first parents transformed this nature into a diabolical one which, by a necessary law of generation, descends to all their posterity. I reply that no such doctrine concerning original sin can be established by Scriptural proofs. Moreover, the analysis of human nature demonstrates that it contains no inherent principle of sin. It is worthy of remark that no writer, in defence of the imputation of Adam's sin to all the race, attempts to support the sentiment by arguments derived from reason. No theologian asserts that an infant actually commits sin as soon as it is born. But the usual position taken by divines is, that as the young rattlesnake comes into the world with a venemous nature, which makes it certain that its bite will be pestiferous at a certain stage of development, just so the infant is born with a moral nature which will infallibly cause it to commit sin and only sin, whenever it reaches the period of free agency.

What then? Suppose an infant to be born without eyes and ears, and to grow up blind and deaf. Is that child liable to be blamed and punished for not seeing and hearing? On the contrary, it is deserving of commiseration only on account of these constitutional defects. So, if one has brought into the world with him such a moral nature, that by necessity it becomes sinful as soon as capable of sinning, he is most eminently an object of pity, but not of blame. In all those human actions that take place by necessity of nature, such as the movements of the lungs and the palpitations of the heart, there can be nothing moral because they are not under the power of the will. In the same manner, if human beings, in consequence of an uncontrollable

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law of their mental constitution, break the divine precepts, you cannot justly blame them for it any more than you can blame the clouds, the weather, the wind, or the lightning for the manner in which they operate.

The late Professor Stuart, of Andover, Mass., who was regarded as the Coryphæus of Trinitarianism in the United States, says in his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, that, "The fictitious process of accounting for human depravity on the ground of imputed sin, which in this way becomes our own, is not what the Bible asserts or seems to maintain. There is not in all the Scriptures an instance in which one man's sin or righteousness is said to be imputed to another. The very reverse is declared, that the child, under the government of Heaven, shall never be made to bear the guilt of a parent. It may suffer from his misconduct, but cannot partake of his guilt, unless it perform the same sinful acts, and thus becomes guilty in *propria persona.*" This view of the matter is now insisted upon by most of the so-called orthodox pulpits throughout the New England States. No wonder that their Presbyterian brethren south and west, look upon them as wanderers from the ancient and venerable standards of the Calvinistic church. I respect and admire the professors of the Princeton Theological Seminary for their consistency and unflinching avowal of old-fashioned Calvinism. He who denies the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, has in reality abjured the faith which our Puritanical forefathers brought with them to these western shores.

St. Augustine, about fifteen hundred years ago (and who has exercised an almost unlimited sway over the belief of Christendom ever since), gave to the world the following definition of sin:—"Sin is a corruption of human nature, produced by imputing

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the guilt of the first transgression committed by Adam and Eve to all their descendants." And the consequent, essential, inherent depravity of human nature would involve our complete, eternal ruin, without an atonement, even if we were polluted with no actual transgression, should never perform a sinful act ourselves. And this great man defines imputation by saying "that it is ascribing to an individual, guilt *not really his own*—not contracted by the obliquity of his personal volition and doings." Moreover, he illustrates his meaning by the following statement:—"If an infant die only one day old, devoid of an interest in the vicarious atonement made by Christ, it will sink down forever under the weight of almighty, infinite, and eternal wrath"—the wrath of its own Creator.

The same divine undertakes to show where sin originated—all the sin on earth—all the sin which now operates in so many ways and so many forms to darken and depress the fortunes of mankind. And where do you think the first sin was born? Why in heaven itself. The earliest sinners the universe ever saw appeared among those exalted, immaculate spirits who "rose unfolded and blossomed in the uncreated beam, on the banks of the river of life," who, through an unknown, unreckoned series of ages, had chanted the octaves of that temple not made with hands. According to this theory, sin can boast, indeed, of an illustrious pedigree. And we so weak, so little, blind, and debased, can trace our ancestry far back—backwards beyond all the geologic ages, beyond the birth of time, of planets, suns, and systems, upon a line that is lost in the fathomless abysses of an eternity passed.

Some time or other, he tells us a portion of the angels became ambitious and discontented. To gratify unhallowed passions they entered into a conspiracy to dethrone the omnipotent, and possess

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themselves of the reins of universal government. Failing in this strange, unaccountable, audacious enterprise, after a gallant assault on the battlements of heaven, the hot thunderbolts of an offended Deity drove them maimed, wounded, and blackened, out of Paradise. These apostates and rebels were loaded with irons and shut up in that famous prison-house (situated nobody can tell where) called hell. Had not the omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent One the means requisite to keep those wicked spirits where they could do no harm; after having once caused "the infernal doors to be opened for their confinement, with impetuous recoil and jarring sound, and on their hinges grating harsh thunder?" Yet, He permitted some one to let them out from their penitentiary, to engage again in scenes of mischief — to tempt and pollute the innocent. Yes, they were allowed to go forth and accomplish the ruin of beings whom God loved "*as the apple of his eye*," and whom he had created for the enjoyment of everlasting happiness and glory in his blissful presence.

Does not the rule hold equally good in theology as in civil law, that what *one does by another is really his own act*? Yes, according to the theory above-named, God permitted Satan and his satellites to assail Adam and Eve, when they were enjoying the health, life, vigor, and beauty of Paradise — "those happy walks and shades, fit haunt of gods." Instigated by the devil, led astray by his specious and flattering falsehoods, and without the thought or intention of any wrong, by one solitary sin they lost communion with God, incurred his wrath and curse, and were instantly metamorphosed into demons—and demons so utterly bad as to be incapable of a good thought, word or deed. More, this original sin introduced all the physical evils which mankind endure in this world—such as mor-

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tality, disease, pain, sterility, briars, thorns, poisonous reptiles, beasts of prey, earthquakes, volcanos, floods, conflagrations, the boisterous ocean, the tempestuous storm, the inclemencies of weather, thunder, lightning, all destructive violence of the elements, sick-rooms, hospitals, death-beds, graveyards, &c. All this is suggested by that striking personification of Milton, upon Eve's eating the forbidden fruit:

> "So saying, her rash hand in evil hour,
> Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she ate;
> Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,
> Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
> That all was lost."

Beautiful poetry! But just as chimerical and fabulous as anything which can be found in the mythology of Greece or Rome. Indeed, this story originated in Pagan literature. It is not sustained by one text of the Bible truly interpreted. To speak plainly, I know nothing in the legends of Paganism more shocking to reason than the idea that the Deity can justly pursue with hatred and curses through eternity, countless millions of his children on account of an offence committed before they were born. This doctrine ascribes to our Creator a character infinitely more odious and awful than that which the imaginary Jupiter of the heathen world was supposed to possess. For it declares that the Being whom Jesus represented as our Father is actuated by boundless and immutable wrath—a wrath that will never for a moment intermit its power, intensity, and destructiveness. But, according to Hesiod, Homer, and other authors, Jupiter is not always angry. Sometimes, indeed, he loses his temper, becomes clothed with terrors, and vents his bad passions by shaking Olympus to its centre, scattering abroad his lightnings, and

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desolating poor, helpless mortals with floods, conflagrations, earthquakes, and volcanos. But his fury is soon exhausted; the better principles of his nature resume their sway; and he once more smiles with unclouded benevolence, and, in consultation with the other gods, contrives vast schemes for the advancement of empire, knowledge, and happiness among men. This divinity is, to my mind, incomparably more amiable and attractive than the God whom Calvin professed to love, honor, and obey.

It is a melancholy reflection that the absurd notion of infinite, unbending vengeance, has, in a greater or less degree, darkened and corrupted all law, all art, all literature, all government, all systems of education, all forms of religious worship, all that bears the names of piety, morals, and refinement throughout the civilized world. Yes, he who is styled Infinite Love in Scripture, has been portrayed as our dreadful, irresistible, omnipresent enemy—an enemy that for the last six thousand years (we know not how much longer) has been performing among men "as upon a darkened stage," the most strange and fearful tragedies—tragedies that veil in midnight the annals of time gone by, and also cast a thick cloud upon our future and everlasting prospects. There is nothing in Atheism itself half so appalling as that mysterious evil which theologians describe sin to be; and for the suppression of which there are so much praying, and preaching, and church-going—such prodigious efforts made, and so much money expended every year. The false views to which I allude, have infected persons of the greatest genius, worth, and merit—the loftiest minds that have lived—the Dantes, Miltons, and Shakspeares of all lands. The thought of an incensed Creator has been set up, like the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, in the most holy places of human society.

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It overshadowed the cradle in which our infancy reposed. In the nursery, the first lesson which fell from the lips of maternal tenderness embraced the doctrine of an endless hell. It overshadowed the church, the school, and all the paths that we traversed in "life's morning march, when the bosom was young," blighting and crushing our ingenuous hearts, and the noblest, most generous affections of which human nature is capable, and covering heaven and earth with gloom and horror.

What is sin? What are its natural, legitimate, and necessary consequences? By what means can we be delivered from it? In the wide range of these inquiries lies all the information that we really need, and which (thanks to our Heavenly Father) we actually possess. And these questions have been ably, warmly, and eloquently discussed among divines in every period of the Christian era. The contest is still going on, but with far less bitterness and exasperation of spirit than were manifested of old. Since my memory, pamphlets, sermons, reviews, and larger works on this subject have been published in the United States, sufficiently numerous to fill a small chapel. And it is matter of joy that divines do not sin as much as they once did in discussing the point—What is sin?

Among most religious societies, "What do you think about sin?" is looked upon as an interrogatory of the highest consequence. And the answer which any clergyman may give to it, in the public opinion, fixes the rank which he occupies in the scale of theological science, and even the attainments of piety. He is called very good, or so so, or middling, or below mediocrity, or quite indifferent and inferior, or utterly devoid of those acquirements essential to the proper discharge of clerical duties, according to the peculiar views which he inculcates with respect to human depravity. I am not dis-

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posed to find fault with this standard of ministerial qualifications. Let it be everywhere recognized. It is best, however, under such circumstances, for every minister to define his position. It is best for himself, for the congregation over which he presides, and for his general usefulness in the community where he lives.

There is not a clergyman in the United States, who has the moral hardihood to stand up in his pulpit and say with St. Augustine, that without the interposition of the atonement made by the death and sufferings of Christ, an infant dying but one day old, would be doomed to eternal punishment on account of Adam's sin. He dare not teach such a horrid dogma in explicit terms. But he avows what is tantamount thereto that infants bring into the world with them a nature so sinful, that were it not for the intervening grace of God through Jesus, they would, by a law of absolute necessity, sink down into the pit of endless perdition. And what becomes of those ministers who are frank and honest enough to disavow these sentiments? How are they treated by the great majority of those who call themselves Christians? These questions suggest their own answers.

Discarding then all theological figments, I cordially subscribe to the definition of sin given by Bishop Butler, in his discourses on the Constitution of Man. This prelate belonged to the church of England, was of course a Trinitarian, and is admitted to have been among the most pious and learned divines of his day. He wrote that celebrated work known to every educated clergyman in Christendom, styled, "*The Analogy between Natural and Revealed Religion.*" He stoutly denies that sin is an innate, inherent, essential attribute of human nature. Or, in other words, he affirms that men are not born sinners any more than they are born scholars, ar-

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tists, painters, sculptors, poets, musicians, or philosophers. But they come into the world with certain intellectual and moral capacities, in themselves good, such as the love of food, love of rest, love of happiness, love of property, power, knowledge, society, reputation, beauty, virtue, &c.

Now, it is self-evident that these principles are not in themselves sinful — abstractly considered. Let us scrutinize for a moment, the precise nature of that process by which we transgress the laws of God. It is a duty to satisfy the feelings of hunger and thirst. But when one allows himself in intemperance, he becomes a sinner by not subjecting these appetites to the restraints dictated by reason and conscience. Both assure us in language which cannot be misunderstood, that it is wrong to injure ourselves or our fellow-beings by the gratification of animal appetites and propensities. There is not an inclination that the Creator has given us, which is not in itself, a good. It becomes an evil only when it is exercised in an improper manner. The love of property is a noble and necessary passion, and when confined within proper limits is entirely consonant with the will of God. But if allowed to gain a dangerous preponderance, it becomes a blind, intense, unscrupulous desire, hardening the finer sensibilities of the soul, and producing unspeakable degradation and wretchedness. The same remarks are applicable to the love of power, and all the other active principles with which we have been endowed. The love of religion is the loftiest sentiment which we possess, but when unenlightened and uncontrolled by reason and conscience, it degenerates into bigotry, hate, acrimonious zeal, persecution and murder.

Admitting the validity of this statement, it follows that all which is denominated sin in the Scriptures, is nothing essentially, but a *misuse* of some faculty

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or talent conferred on us by God, and that in itself it is good, and only good. This definition embraces all that is possible for us to know about the nature of sin in the present world. We may easily be convinced of the truth of this assertion, by one days' careful watching of the movements in our own minds. For myself, it is not in my power to name a single violation of the decalogue, which is anything more than a *misuse* of some gift or blessing bestowed on us by our Creator. Bishop Butler takes the ground that malice and revenge proceed from an improper indulgence of resentment, by which he means a "lively perception of the injuries and injustice inflicted upon us." He contends that the mind of Jesus sometimes felt resentment, as above explained. For we read, that on a certain occasion, he looked around upon an assembly of bitter opposers *with anger*, (or a holy displeasure against sin, as an old expounder explains it), *being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.* St. Paul says, "Be angry and sin not." "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." From which passages we learn, that the springing up of resentment in the mind is sometimes unavoidable, and in that case there is nothing unhallowed in it.

Dr. Channing somewhere uses the following words: "Our desires are to be denied or governed; by which, I mean not exterminated, but renounced as masters, guides, lords, and brought into strict subordination to our moral and intellectual powers. It is a false idea that religion requires the extermination of any principle, desire, appetite or passion, which our Creator has implanted. Our nature is a whole, a beautiful whole, and no part can be spared. You might as properly and innocently lop off a limb from the body, as eradicate any natural desire from the mind. All our appetites are in themselves innocent and useful, ministering to the general weal of the

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soul. They are like the elements of the physical world, fire, air, water, &c., parts of a wise and beneficent system, but like those elements are beneficent only when restrained. Our minds are so organized that we cannot serve God and Mammon both. Let a person renounce the guidance of reason and conscience, and yield himself to any inordinate, ungoverned passion, and his heart will soon become dark, desolate and corrupt. The proportion, order and harmony of one's nature are subverted without self-denial, and his soul becomes as monstrous and deformed as the body would become, were all the nutriment it takes, to flow into a few organs, and these the least valuable, and to break out into loathsome excrescences, whilst the eye, the ear, and the most important limbs should pine and be palsied and leave us without guidance — without the powers requisite to enjoyment and usefulness."

Look at the condition of a confirmed voluptuary who gives himself up to the unrestrained indulgence of his bodily appetites and passions. His nature is well enough if he would only use it aright. But his creed, and consequently his doings are in fault. He maintains, that as the bee goes forth to suck the means of life from the aroma of the flowery world, so man's true mission on earth is to explore the realms of nature, that he may extract from them the largest possible amount and variety of sensual delights. He stands here looking forth upon this majestic array of worlds and systems, not to be the interpreter, as he might be of the Creator's works, and his vicegerent — his best likeness below, but in common with his fellow-brute to pass his hours in drinking the cup of earthly pleasure, *ad libitum*, without caring for consequences. He disdains to enquire whether any particular course of life or action is right or wrong, lawful or unlawful, guilty or not guilty. He lives only to pander to his lusts

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and appetites — he surrenders himself to this ignoble ministry in youth, in maturer years, perhaps in advanced age, till his race is run; his sun is about setting, and at last he sinks down to be lost forever in infamy, and in the darkness and oblivion of the grave.

I have been personally acquainted with many of this description, and attended them as a clergyman in their dying hours. Invariably they have uttered the strongest language of self-condemnation, and acknowledged that they might and should have led lives of self-denial, honor and usefulness. "Death is an honest hour and faithful to its trust." I have listened to many a death-bed confession of the following kind. I use my own words.

"O may God have mercy upon me. Can he forgive and save a creature so fallen and guilty as I am? Like the prodigal son I have wasted my days and nights, my talents, and my fortune in the pur suit of ruin and unhallowed pleasures. I have been unfaithful to the most solemn and interesting relations of life. By my excesses and follies I have carried desolation into the bosom of domestic life — into the crushed and bleeding hearts of wife, children, relatives and friends. I have ruined young men by my pestiferous, seductive conversation and example. And I have no excuse to offer by way of extenuation. I have destroyed myself on the one hand, by the most deliberate, wilful gratification of pernicious appetites and passions, and on the other by a fond, foolish, thoughtless indulgence, doating with a mixture of idiocy and madness. Instead of steeping my soul in besotting sensualities, bowing down my divine, immortal faculties below the level of the brute, I might have clothed myself with celestial beauty; in the grandeur of moral excellence — as the rocky promontory that repels the waves of ocean — I might have beaten back the

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dark surges of earth's sins and temptations, and lived so as to have been a light and blessing to all around me. Oh! is it possible that such a wretch as I am, should ever be forgiven," &c.

I have noticed that the views which dying men express concerning sin, always coincide with the representations of Scripture on this subject. They never attempt to cast the blame of their wrong doing on the perverseness and imbecility of human nature. On the contrary, in spite of the temptations and bad influences that allured them from the right path, they invariably confess that "their derelictions were utterly inexcusable." The truth is no man ever chooses sin as such, but he naturally hates it. Take the vilest man that lives; if he could obtain the gratification on which his heart is set — be it property, office, or sensual pleasure — honestly and innocently he would greatly prefer it on such terms. But despairing of success by honorable means, he wilfully tramples upon the dictates of his conscience and the waves of guilt sweep him away. I have heard a father say in this trying hour, that he would give the whole world if he had it, for the assurances of forgiveness, and the supporting hopes of Christianity. "O!" I have heard him exclaim, "that my sons could be brought up religiously, and escape the wretchedness and horrors of the debasing life which I have led."

To persons in this condition I have often put the following question: "Could any inducement have persuaded you to have entered on the course of a dissolute life, if you had foreseen its terrible consequences.?" The reply has always been a strong negative. "I thought that sin would give me the greatest pleasure, therefore I pursued it."

> "Pleasure or wrong, or rightly understood,
> Our greatest evil, or our greatest good."

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In the proper sense of the word, we were created for pleasure, which is the synonyme of happiness. But how many mistake the way to it! What a multitude of delusions blind and deceive us! Innumerable "*ignus fatui*," draw us from the plain ground into ruin. Perhaps from sheer ignorance of what is requisite to true happiness, the majority launch their frail barks upon a wide, tempestuous, destructive sea, only to be dashed against the rocks, or submerged in the overwhelming waves. Happiness, that sacred, divine possession, free from all taint of pollution, comes from the normal, healthy, harmonious development and exercise of all our faculties both of body and mind. Astronomers have proved that if a planet, moon, asteroid, or comet were to stand still, or deviate an hair's breadth from its present orbit, this eccentricity would spread ruin through every portion of the celestial empire. So, if a single power of human nature is allowed to remain unimproved, or go wrong, it hinders or destroys the healthy action of the whole soul. If there were one man on earth who had always used his entire nature aright, he would be as exempt from sin as an angel. I believe that every child would grow up virtuously, if it could clearly see beforehand what would afford the highest pleasure. But such knowledge alas, children do not possess. And many pleasures appear to them wonderfully alluring and flattering in the prospect, the possession of which brings upon them shame, sorrow, want and guilt, when they vainly imagined they were on the road to peace and prosperity. Ignorance after all is, perhaps, the most frequent source of misconduct.

Suppose for a moment that the skeptical argument is correct; that man's only and highest good is physical pleasure — that death is an eternal sleep — and that of course it is mere twaddling for one to stand up in the pulpit, to speak of the worth and

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dignity of the immortal mind, the superiority of the soul to the body; the worthiness, delicacy and refinement of mental delights; and the meanness, grossness, and deleterious results of those gratifications which belong pre-eminently to the body. Still letting myself down to the low plane of mere animalism, even then, I would contend that to make the most of the body — to secure to it the largest amount of pleasure which it is capable of receiving between this, and the moment when it shall be smitten by the hand of death — it must be subjected to the salutary restraints and laws of Christian virtue. For all experience has demonstrated that when one disobeys the dictates of rectitude and honor in the management of bodily appetites, by his own suicidal act, he takes a key and locks fast the doors of all his senses against the visitations of sweet and blessed peace. He does more than this negative injury to himself, he makes his very senses the instruments of acute pain — avenues to sorrow and suffering beyond the power of words to express. If all realized this fact, all would become true Christians. Yes, the strongest motives to immediate repentance are not those which are drawn from the most vivid, startling descriptions of the future woe alleged to be in store for those who die unreformed. The most powerful dissuasive from a wicked life which the pulpit can urge, are just representations of the dreadful, unavoidable consequences that flow from the wide-spread, unchanging, eternal laws of our present existence — especially that law which renders it impossible for us to enjoy the temporal blessings of this day, to-morrow, or any future time, unless we cast ourselves upon the benefaction, lights and resources of immortal goodness. This is the only element in which we can breathe freely — have freedom, elastic spirits, and supporting hopes. To the enjoyment of each passing day, virtue is as

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necessary as sunshine for the eye, air for the lungs, or the refreshment of nightly repose, or food to satisfy the cravings of hunger. But more on this topic will be presented in the sequel. What I wish to insist on particularly here, is the fact that in the hour of death, those who have led the most depraved lives freely confess their guilt; freely admit that they might have done better, and that they violated the faculties of a divine and noble nature by plunging into excesses and profligacy. They have often told me that the memory of a misdirected and dishonered life weighed upon them like mountains, crushing them down to unutterable anguish. Now, if Providence had never spoken to us by a supernatural revelation; if the Gospel were but a fable, these confessions of dying offenders to which I have alluded, demonstrate that upon the supposition of no future existence beyond the grave, true religion is more important to our peace, than all things else attainable on earth.

There is one argument against the innate corruption of our nature which seems to me unanswerable — sufficient to convince the most stubborn of skeptics. The New Testament teaches that every active principle of our nature, was possessed by our Lord Jesus Christ himself. His physical constitution was precisely like ours. He had all our mental and bodily propensities, because we read that he was a perfect man. In him were the love of food, the love of drink, love of rest, love of sleep, love of property, love of knowledge, pleasure, reputation, power, fame, society, friends, relatives, &c. Of course, they cannot in themselves be sinful, for Jesus was absolutely immaculate. Besides, we are assured that the Son of God was tempted in all respects just as we are, and yet he was never drawn into the practice of wrong by any of these temptations. Mere inducements or temptations to sin cannot of

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themselves make one a sinner. It is by yielding to temptations that we fall into guilt and wretchedness. But Jesus Christ never obeyed a sinful suggestion. He was invariably loyal to his sense of duty. And the Apostle says, that it was in this point only, that he differed from us, so far as mere moral excellence is concerned. In our common nature, then, with all its infirmities, abstractly considered, it is certain that there is no sin.

But, it is asked, why have we been so made as to be capable of being tempted to the commission of evil—the misuse of our powers? This is an idle, not to say stupid question. The Son of God, as just stated, was made like us. Was not his nature kindly and gloriously constituted? Why have all things been created just as they are? Why are two-thirds of the earth's surface covered with water? Why is the diameter of this globe so much less than that of Jupiter? Why is a rose different from a lily? Why is the majestic oak taller than the peach, apple, or cherry tree? These inquiries display just as much wisdom as the question, why has the human race been constituted weak and fallible?

"God," says Dr. Channing, "has given us strong desires of inferior things, that war against duty, that we might assert the supremacy of conscience over them, and thus impart to this high faculty the dignity and joy of dominion and triumph. He has surrounded us with rivals to himself that we may love him freely, and by our own unfettered choice erect his throne in our souls. He has endued us with ardent desires of inferior objects that the desire of spiritual excellence may grow stronger than all. Let not appetite or passion (as the objector wishes) resist God's will, nor come in competition with duty; and where would be the resolution and energy, and constancy, and effort, and

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purity, the trampling under foot of low interests, the generous self-surrender, the heroic devotion, all the sublimities of virtue, which now throw lustre over man's nature, and proclaim his heavenly origin and immortal destination. If conscience and desire were always coincident, and prescribed the same path, man would move upon the same plane of existence with the brute creation, be incapable of self-sacrifice and that renunciation of desire essential to our moral power and greatness."

If we had nothing but appetites and passions, there would be no such things as virtue and vice in the world. We should be mere automatons. Our movements would be constrained, necessary, and mechanical, like those of a watch. There would be no room in our nature for moral excellence, truth, wisdom, integrity, candor, faith, benevolence, and other principles which constitute our likeness to God, and fit us for an everlasting progress in a future state.

Dr. Chalmers, a Calvinistic divine of great eminence, asserts that no sentient being can act out his nature truly, and be at the same time miserable; for God could not create a living being of any kind, the sound, healthy, and natural exercise of whose faculties would, by necessity, make it miserable. But sinful actions always, and by an inevitable law, lead to wretchedness. They must, therefore, be unnatural, against nature, or a perversion of man's nature. What a simple, incontrovertible argument!

Writers on mental philosophy tell us that mankind could not admire any beauty or excellence, physical or moral, unless they had the germs or elements thereof in their own bosoms. But the worst person living can understand and appreciate noble, virtuous actions. Yes, thank Heaven, in the darkest, most desolate mind, there is a chord—a string which never can be broken, in the lyre of

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the deathless spirit, no matter how depraved—that responds to the charms and glories of immortal virtue. This position is undisputed and indisputable. Could a person admire virtue unless he had a virtuous nature? could one admire music unless he had a musical nature? or a picture, statue, and landscape, unless he had an artistic nature, or what is commonly called taste—a natural power to perceive the beautiful? When we see a man do a base act, prevaricate, falsify, deceive, defraud, oppress, or plunge himself into mean, besotting indulgences, we censure and condemn him. We reprobate his course of conduct. We declare that he is to blame, or deserves punishment. Why to blame, unless he had power at the same time to practice the opposite virtues—to have done the pure, true, good, and beneficent? So, in every instance, when we thoroughly scrutinize the subject, we shall find that sin is nothing more than the misuse of a good faculty—the perversion of a natural ability to do right—the perversion of a glorious nature. The opposite dogma, that we are born without power to perform the duties which we owe to God, to our fellow-beings, and ourselves, is a fallacy alike derogatory to our Creator, and deleterious to the best interests of mankind. Not all the infidel books in the world; not all the social evils that abound—pauperism, profaneness, intemperance, desecration of the Sabbath, crimes and immoralities of every species, impede the progress of Christianity so much as the inculcation of this monstrous, unreasonable, unscriptural sentiment.

I repeat it, men naturally love what is good, and can practice it if they choose. The human will is a sublime and comprehensible power. An illustration of its inscrutable and wondrous agency may be drawn from the department of learning. Who, in the successive ages of the civilized world, have

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shone the brightest in the circles of art, literature and science? Not those with respect to whom wealth and station threw around them libraries, consummate teachers, and the amplest means of literary advancement. But, eminent scholars generally started upon the career of improvement amid the greatest disadvantages of want and obscurity. Among them, many of the most conspicuous inherited nothing but orphanage and destitution. Condemned, in the beginning, to perform the most menial offices to procure a bare subsistence, they begged or borrowed a candle and a book, over which they spent those hours of the night that were so much needed for repose, after the exhausting labors of the day. They rose on the pinions of an indomitable will. This found or created for them the requisite means and opportunities. This made them strong and invincible. This disarmed difficulties, and in some cases turned them into helpers and friends. In Scripture language, with this they levelled mountains, filled up valleys, made the crooked straight, and the rough smooth. Thus, eventually they became stars in the intellectual firmament, enlarged the boundaries of truth, carried the lamp of discovery into the recesses of God's works, and brought back acquisitions which will enrich and illumine the world even to the latest generation.

A hundredth part of the mental energy which they exerted in the pursuit of learning, directed towards the attainment of religious excellence, would have made them equal to the apostles—models of every virtue belonging to the Christian character. It is easier to be a true disciple of Jesus than to become a distinguished artist, painter, sculptor, poet, or philosopher. One half of the efforts which a boy ten years old makes to learn his lessons at school would imbue his soul with the

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graces and genius of genuine piety. A small portion of the industrious exertion put forth by the inhabitants of Boston, or New York, in carrying on their temporal enterprises would elevate them to the glorious standard of Evangelical perfection. The greatest reprobate in either of these cities, though now a pitiable, deformed, loathsome outcast, by the mysterious power of will, could rise from degradation to consummate honor, renounce his follies, put on the robes of worth and wisdom, and shine forth in the loveliness and accomplishments of angelic virtue. Yes, the general obstacles to any one's becoming good are expressed by the phrase *he will not* rather than the words *he cannot*. Men do not try to honor God with all their might and main, and this is the true reason of their failing to do so. I was once in the company of a man exceedingly addicted to intemperance. Next to this vice, his strongest passion was the love of money. He happened to remark that it was not in his power to reform and become sober, that his unfortunate propensity was too mighty to be controlled by his volition. In reply, I said to him, "If you knew, with absolute certainty, that by total abstinence from all intoxicating drink for the space of one month, or one year, you could gain a million of dollars, would it not be in your power to abstain from the favorite indulgence that length of time?" He answered promptly and frankly in the affirmative. This, of course, settled at once the mooted question of his moral ability to be temperate.

It is certain that Jesus Christ did not recognize the doctrine that human nature is totally corrupt, and absolutely incapable of obeying the divine law, until it has experienced a supernatural change, effected by the resistless influences of the Holy Spirit. Look at and scan the discourses which our Saviour addressed to as vile and hardened sinners as ever lived. What is the character of these dis-

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courses? They consist of the most solemn and affectionate appeals to the *good* principles contained in the bosoms of the sinful—their love of rectitude —their love of truth—their spontaneous appreciation of the beautiful and grand in nature and morals—their attachment to relatives and friends—their generous and disinterested sentiments—and, above all, to their inborn love of the infinite One. The teachings of Jesus Christ would have been absolutely unintelligible to his hearers had they been devoid of the elementary principles just named.

When the sternest, most rigid Calvinistic minister preaches to sinners, what is the tenor of his remarks to them? Why, he tells them that they are guilty, hell-deserving offenders in the sight of God, because they cast off prayer to him, and have no reverence for his character—because they utter slander and falsehood, or are fraudulent in their business transactions, or steep themselves in the indulgences of the inebriating bowl, &c. Now, these are tremendous charges, and well-sustained by reason and Scripture. But, allow me simply to ask, would these sinners be deserving of such reproachful epithets —would they be to blame at all for leading prayerless, profane, unthankful, and profligate lives, when they had no power to do better—when they had no ability to abstain from such practices? Is it not self-evident that a sinner ought not to be punished for any particular offence, unless at the time of the said commission, he had power to restrain himself and exercise the opposite virtue? You pay the highest compliment to the nature of a man by calling him a sinner. This, if true, implies that he is, indeed, but a little lower than the angels—has divine faculties which enable him to beat back the surging tide of external allurements—keep the commandments inviolate, subdue and deny his sinful desires, and do the will of Heaven.

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If the most depraved person were to open his intellect to receive the beauties and sublimities of religious truth, the mists of error and ignorance would no longer cloud his spiritual vision; his conscience would instantly become animated and effective; he would bid farewell to corruption and folly; abstain from sinful indulgences; and cherish the immaculate principles of Christian worth. Yes, the most poor, prostrate, and imbecile sinner has power to break the fetters of degrading habits, and rise to the enjoyment of freedom, penitence, sanctity, love, and the life immortal. For without these prerogatives sinners would be as irresponsible, as incapable of being moved by the exhortations of the pulpit as the tombstones in a cemetery.

I heard a clergyman preach a sermon not long since, in which he labored to show that our natural propensities must be corrupt, because no one could adopt them as the guide and standard of his actions in life without inevitable guilt and destruction. This argument is most shallow and defective. A child can see through such sophistry. A child knows that it is improper—wrong—to make his propensities the supreme and only law of his conduct. Desire or propensity is, indeed, a correct principle of human action, but being in itself blind and indiscriminating, it cannot perform the office of a moral law. For example, the love of property is, in itself, an innocent impulse, but cannot suggest the sentiments of justice, honor, doing as we would be done by, &c. But, unless controlled by these higher principles of our nature, the desire of gain, though abstractly good, may contaminate and destroy us. This remark is applicable to all our constitutional impulses. The cravings of hunger and thirst unrestrained by reason and conscience lead to baneful excesses. In brutes, desire is a law, standard and guide of action, and never inclines

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them to what is improper or hurtful to them. They always stop at the right place, and are not capable of pernicious indulgences. But, in man, desire does not cease of itself, when further gratification tends to injure health and destroy happiness. "In brutes, the animal appetites impel to a certain round of simple gratifications, beyond which they never pass. But man, by the aid of imagination and reflection, is able to expand his sensual desires indefinitely. He is able to form unnatural combinations of animal pleasures by artificial stimulants. Whilst the animal finds its nourishment in a few plants or a single blade, man's table groans under the spoils of all regions; and the consequence is that not in a few cases the whole strength of the soul runs into appetite, just as some rich soil shoots up into poisonous weeds, and man the rational creature of God, degenerates into the most thorough sensualist. The powers which ally us to the Creator, when pressed into the service of merely sensual desire, enlarge it into unnatural excess, and irritate appetite into a morbid fury. Then all the nobler attainments and products of the soul die. The lower principles of our nature not only act blindly, but, if neglected, grow indefinitely, and overshadow, blight, and destroy virtue, honor, religion, hope, faith, and charity."—(Channing.)

Unrestrained by reason, a propensity though in itself good, will subvert the proportion, order, and harmony of our spiritual constitution, and fill the soul with disease, pain, and deformity. Everybody virtually admits this. Go to the lowest, most obtuse sinner, and ask him if he thinks it right to follow all our natural propensities without restraint? He would exclaim at once, "Do you mean to insult me? Do you suppose that I am a brute—that I have no ideal of the great, sublime, and excellent? And such a fact shows, that in the most fallen man

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there is a germ or element of divinity which was designed to control his lower nature—that his soul was not created simply to revel for a few hours in the joys of time and sense—like a bird, to find its sole gratification in picking up a few grains of dust on these dark shores of time, and then to become nothing; but that it has been called into existence to soar upwards when the body goes back to its original elements; to span unlimited space and measure endless ages; to tread the broad and boundless pathways of a destiny that has no end. Cicero in a treatise on morals affirms, that the doctrine which makes it right to follow our feelings and desires, without regard to justice, would destroy not only civilization, literature and the temples of the gods, but even the human race itself. Then follow these memorable words: "Thieves and robbers must have a moral code to regulate their several relations and interests, or no society could subsist among them." Surely Christian teachers should not let their principles down below the standard of heathen morality. The natural state of man is not like that of the brute, exclusive subjection to animal appetite and passion; following blindly a mere impulse — a feeling without any regard to morality. But he is so constituted that his propensities, in themselves beneficent, unguided by reason and conscience, will inevitably sink, prostrate, and almost destroy his soul. And such a life is not nature, but a perversion and abuse of it.

Let us then bear in mind that sin is not an innate, intrinsic corruption of man. We cannot entertain too exalted views of the dignity, and capacity, and destination of the soul. If all really understood and appreciated their mental superiority, they would soar above all gross, debasing, sinful indulgences. It is a great mistake to suppose that a low estimate of the worth of human nature is favorable to virtue

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of any kind. Directly the reverse is the case. Make one believe that he is totally depraved, incapable of real goodness — not a whit better than a fiend or a demon, — fill his mind with a deep and undoubting conviction of the truth of this doctrine, and you will inflict upon him a great, terrific, and irreparable injury. Tell little children all the time — "that they are bad — very bad and naughty," — and you will spoil them. Millions have been ruined in this way. Incentives requisite to good in the young are by such inculcations prevented or destroyed. When a person thinks meanly of his endowments — looking upon himself as equally abject, vile and despicable with the worm under foot, he must of course be destitute of those inspiring hopes and elevated sentiments, without which no one can successfully resist the allurements of time and sense. Noble conduct can only spring from noble views of one's talents and destiny.

In the discourses of our Saviour, sinners are continually reminded of the grandeur of their origin and spiritual nature. Jesus made his hearers feel that they had been created for something better than unsatisfying possessions of an outward world. Whilst drinking in his beautiful words they realized that wealth, rank and fashion were not the brightest things in man's horizon; the splendors of earth faded away from their sight, and the realities of a spiritual existence filled and absorbed their thoughts. And whilst he spread before them the glories and magnificence of that immortal state which awaits us all, and contrasted it with the insignificance of earth — the idea of eternity in all its amplitude and solemnities, seized upon their imaginations — and they looked out upon new, vast, unbounded prospects; scenes and wonders, stretching along in interminable prospective beyond the clouds, darkness, shadows and vicissitudes of this mortal life.

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Why do so many labor for this world only? Why are all their hopes and fears bounded by the grave? Why is it that time, the most effective and eloquent of all preachers, utters his impressive warnings and exhortations to them in vain? Why do they sink into *ennui* and despair, when they behold the objects of their heart's highest love mouldering into the dust? Because they underrate, and have no just perception of their own glorious nature. Because they do not realize that the image of God is stamped on their souls; that they are identified with his own eternity; that they have not been made merely for the present state; and that the hours are fast bearing them to the sublimities of a future and boundless existence. If all sinners could to-day be brought to realize that God loves them: that they have been created to live, think, feel, act, and improve forever; that their relations to earth are a shadow and a dream, but their relations to eternity are unspeakably momentous, enduring, and indissoluble, they would instantly bid adieu to sin with all its soul-destroying influences — shrink with horror from whatever tends to degrade natures that bear the glorious likeness of the Divinity, and soar on the wings of faith, hope, joy and sanctity, towards those illimitable heavens, for which they believe themselves to have been created. Yes, if the worst man could but catch a faint glimmering of his superlative grandeur by nature and destination beyond the grave, he would immediately rise to the enjoyment of that spiritual life which infinite, omnipotent, unchanging love has provided for our present and everlasting inheritance. Whilst we cannot have too humbling views of our own unworthiness in the sight of God, we are in no danger of forming too high an estimate of our original endowments, nor of the excellence of human nature in general, nor of the character of our fellow beings at large. Fenelon

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says, "there is no one who thinks well enough of his neighbors, but all entertain too exalted an opinion of themselves." Noble sentiment! Though we may discern many defects, and weaknesses in those around us, yet we should always go upon the ground that they are in the main actuated by honest intentions, unless there is absolute, conclusive proof to the contrary — or in other words, that their errors and short-comings proceed from ignorance, thoughtlessness, want of education, inadvertence, or some sudden outburst of passion, which, when it passes off, they are sincerely sorry for. Absolute proof that a person means wrong, when he actually wrong us, is almost impossible. We never had such proof in a half dozen cases during our entire lives.

What a happiness to be able to look upon those with whom we daily associate as essentially good — good in reality — in the recesses of their hearts — in their private, most retired, as well as public deportment! It is terrible when greeted by our acquaintances in the various walks of life, to suspect that the cordial grasp and the smiling face are dictated, not by pure, generous sympathies, but by a cold, narrow, selfish, mercenary, designing heart. If we imagine that those whom we daily meet in the intercourse of life are fundamentally bad people, insincere, or worthless, this persuasion may prevent us from treating them with Christian courtesy, or even with the common civilities which are due from man to man in every department of secular life. In spite of ourselves, without intending it, we shall often be unjust to a neighbor — cold, distant, forbidding and oppressive in our manners. Such a state of mind also will interfere with our personal improvement and peace. Generous, enlarged, charitable sentiments, with respect to our fellow beings, are among the most important means of our own steady

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advancement in knowledge and virtue. But such feelings we cannot possess, so long as we harbor disdain and contempt for our fellow beings — so long as we have a disposition to deny and disparage their apparent excellences, to put the worst construction upon their doubtful actions, and consider them as reduced to the lowest degree in the scale of worth and respectability. We should cultivate even towards those whe are confessedly sinners, the same sentiments of love which led Jesus Christ to undertake the redemption of a lost world.

If we, indeed, cherished Christian benevolence, no feelings of grudge or resentment would lurk in our bosoms, nor hang a cloud upon our faces, nor give an aspect of coldness to our words or actions. We should study to imitate his sublime example, "who left the glory which he had with the Father before the world was," and having assumed human nature, taught us the lessons of heavenly wisdom; became impoverished that we might be enriched; suffered that we might be happy; wept that we might have joy forever; submitted to a painful, ignominious death upon the Cross to unbar for our admission the gates of everlasting life and glory. Jesus loves all sinners, we read, even the vilest and most loathsome. Can we not then, most cheerfully do the same, and be willing to make any sacrifices in our power to promote their welfare? Nay, if we really had the spirit of our Master, we should rejoice, if it were necessary, to die for their salvation.

I repeat it, let us bear in mind that sin is something which we can define, weigh, measure and perfectly understand. We carry in our own bosoms that line, square and compass, by which we can always ascertain the moral character of our motives, principles, and conduct. At any instant we can look upon the purposes that govern us, with an intuitive perception of the right and the wrong which they

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contain. Yes, we are able to ascertain the good and the evil in our hearts and lives, to become acquainted with our particular sins and defects, and see what proportion they bear to our whole character. We have the power not only to see and understand our transgressions, but also to escape from their dominion. Thank God we have power to meliorate our characters, to resist temptation, subdue sin, and build up in our souls the kingdom of holiness. If we wait to have God transform and renew us by a sudden and resistless agency of the Divine Spirit, we shall inevitably be disappointed. If we do not reform and renew ourselves, we shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. All moral good, indeed, comes from God, but it comes through our natural powers, and through his blessing on the faithful use of them.

A distinguished man in his autobiography tells us that he adopted the following plan to improve his character. He divided the leaves of a blank book into eight compartments, by drawing lines from the top to the bottom of each page. In the first column he wrote the names of the principal virtues. At the head of the others he inscribed the days of the week. Beginning with Sunday, he set down in the appropriate place black marks to denote the faults which he had committed during the day. He did the same for all the remaining days of the week. In this way, he assures us, numerous defects of life and character were brought to his knowledge of whose existence he had not previously entertained even the remotest suspicion. At the end of the first Saturday night, the page of the week was very black. He felt the beauty and force of those lines in the 19th Psalm: "Who knoweth his own offences? O, cleanse thou me from secret faults?" He began to understand himself, and gradually as months rolled away, to gaze upon fairer and fairer records of his daily doings.

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By constant supervision, by resolving, praying, and striving, by unremitted and persevering endeavors, he was enabled to rise to comparative peace—to the worth, wisdom, and varied beauties of the Christian character. By following the injunction of our Lord, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"—we might all do the same things for ourselves, and adorn our minds with those attainments of intellectual and moral excellence which will cross the grave and grow more beauteous forever. Religion does not consist in going to church, though this practice is a useful one; it does not consist in an easy, cold, mechanical round of ceremonies on the Sabbath; but in a constant, patient, and prayerful endeavor to do our whole duty during each hour and day of our waking existence. The putting forth of our utmost energies and resolution is essential to the leading of a holy life. It is the noblest enterprise in which man can engage, and cannot be successfully prosecuted without the most undaunted, unshaken, unwearied purposes and efforts. If men would work for their moral advancement with the same zeal and perseverance which they evince in carrying forward their respective schemes of temporal ease, profit, pleasure, or aggrandizement, they would all very soon be emancipated from the bondage and illusions of sin, and become the earnest, consistent, and rejoicing disciples of the great Master.

One of the most fatal and wide-spread errors on the subject of human depravity, is the popular, stereotyped opinion that sin is an infinite, and consequently insurmountable evil, so far as our own exertions are concerned. The Scriptures nowhere teach this doctrine. It is repugnant to the dictates of common sense. Man is in every respect a finite being. It is the necessary result of the relation

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which he sustains to the Creator that all his powers and their effects are circumscribed. The Author of the human mind could not have made it without limits, without fixed allotted boundaries, unless he had disrobed himself of illimitable perfections, and conferred them upon the creature; unless he had made man the source and centre of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, and been willing to assign to himself an inferior and subordinate station in the universe. There must, then, be boundaries to the moral capacity of man, though we may not be able to describe them in clear and definite terms. Even the advocates of infinite evil admit that the merit of any man, however good he may become, must be limited. How, then, can his demerit be unbounded? Seeing things are thus, it is absolutely certain that sin is not an infinite evil. That Being only who possesses boundless attributes has sufficient power to contract an infinite amount of unworthiness. That feeble man should do it does not lie within the range of possibility. If sin be infinite, it can never be destroyed. Upon this theory no atonement, however precious and magnificent, could be of any avail. Whatever is boundless is incapable of increase, diminution, or end. The resources of an Almighty Father can never deliver us from sin, if it deserve an eternal punishment. We cannot, in this case, even suffer the penalty due to a single transgression, for eternity has no end. Upon this platform not a solitary member of the human family will ever receive the punishment which his iniquities call for; and the doctrine taught in the Bible, that God will judge every one according to his deeds, is false and impossible.

We believe in the serious and saddening fact of human depravity. The world taken in the mass, is in many respects a very bad world, and also in many respects it is a very good world. When we look

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abroad upon society, we are pained with the sight of the dreadful miseries inflicted by hard-hearted, invincible, obdurate selfishness, by fraud, falsehood, strife, war, intemperance, libertinism, gambling, crime &c. But a great part of these aberrations is to be ascribed to ignorance and want of proper systems of education rather than to the essential depravation of human nature. The words sin and guilt, though often confounded, are of very different import. They are, for the most part, used indiscriminately for each other, and indeed are very intimately allied.

An important distinction however obtains between them; for a man may commit bad actions without bad intentions — from ignorance, inadvertence, fashion, prejudice, or authority — nay from motives that are in themselves upright and honorable. Among the Pagans, the fond mother sends her most beautiful and beloved child to be butchered by a priest, in order to appease the wrath of an imaginary God. Who can doubt the sincerity of the offering? How many Christian mothers give as strong proof of their devotedness to the principles which they profess. All over the world men are opposing the requirements of the divine law, with an entire honesty of purpose. On the contrary the best persons do much which they know to be wrong. Dr. Channing, a man of extraordinary conscientiousness and purity, tells us, "that his course was often devious; that he was not always true to God and his own mind; that he had cause for humble acknowledgment, and that a deep sense of unworthiness formed a part of his habitual tone of feeling."

Now contrast with this distinguished divine, one of his contemporaries, occupying if you please, the lowest degree in the scale of morality. His whole life was, perhaps, at war with goodness. Grant that he had done the dreadful deeds of an incendiary,

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pirate and murderer; yet it is quite possible that in the sight of God his guilt is not more heinous, or aggravated than that of the eminent man just named. For it is a universally acknowledged principle in ethical science, that the degree of criminality justly imputed to any transgressor, is proportionate to the light and advantages which he has enjoyed and abused. Dr. Channing had a noble nature to begin with. His parents were superior in intellectual and moral endowments, and guarded him in early life from the pollution of evil; watched and disciplined his opening faculties with the utmost assiduity; unfolded to his wondering and delighted spirit by every means in their power, the various beauties of truth, nature, art, literature and science; cultivated his spiritual capacities, and trained them to perceive and admire the radiance of moral loveliness and immortal progress. Indeed, his physical organization of brain, and all the circumstances of his life were of the most propitious character.

But the other was born with inferior phrenological developments. His brain was small, stinted, defective and unbalanced. He became an orphan, being bereft of both father and mother, when but a few days old. He was poor. There was no relative to look after him. All the associations of his early life were of the most unfortunate description. From the beginning he was familiarized to the most terrible, odious forms of vice; not only so, but in addition, accustomed and taught to look upon them as manly, correct and honorable. He grew up entirely destitute of the advantages of a rudimental education — understood neither reading, writing nor arithmetic — was bred to no useful employment. With a scorned, blighted name — an utter outcast from respectable society; his good affections undeveloped; his fortunes utterly dark and desperate, he became a fallen, ruined one from absolute neces-

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sity. And though his character was so depraved; though he did dreadful deeds, waged war against God and man, and at last perished on the gallows, and was laid rejected and dishonored by his fellow-beings in the grave with felons, it is not impossible that, in the sight of heaven, he was no more guilty when he died than the eminent saint whose name has just been mentioned, at the moment of his departure for the spirit land.

What motives do such considerations suggest to cultivate tender and humane sentiments with respect to the most fallen and dreadful victims of sin and degradation. Human nature in the bosom of an infant, is entirely exempt from the stain of sin. There belongs to it the capability both of good and evil. All mankind, says Paul, are created subject to pain, disease, frailty, error, sin and suffering, but he does not teach the depravity of their essential, inherent nature. When I remember how imperfect are our systems of education, what inadequate means, if any at all, are employed to enable children to realize the being, presence and love of the great Father, what exposures to evil they generally encounter at every step of their progress as they pursue the journey of life, I feel an intense conviction that they are much more deserving of pity than blame. It is easy to denounce the sinful, to call them outcasts, wretches, reprobates, &c. In early life one is apt to be indignant and angry at the faults and sins of those around him. But when he has lived longer, and by a wider experience become more thoroughly acquainted with the world, with human nature, and with his own short-comings and deficiencies—when he has imbibed more deeply the spirit and genius of Christianity, no resentments ever ruffle his meek and subdued temper; no scorn, hatred, anger or indignation is ever expressed either by his countenance, words or actions, on account of the offences

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of his neighbors. And while the truly good man, as he advances in years, grows more tolerant, forbearing, and forgiving, at the same time he is penetrated with a deeper, and deeper sense of the evil of sin. He mourns over it most of all in himself, as the only real calamity in the world; the only Upas tree flourishing in the garden of life; the only enemy that can blast our hopes and peace; the only cloud that can cast sombre, portentous shadows upon the otherwise charming landscape of human life.

We read in the gospel that God pities the sinner; that Christ has died for him; that the Holy Spirit strives with him; that the inhabitants of heaven yearn over him, and are ready to welcome him back to their blest abodes. Shall we then, when the poor miserable victim of vice, the shattered remnant of a once noble and respected man, passes before us, treat him with scorn, indifference, railing and denunciation? He may be the meanest of knaves, a loathsome profligate, a reveling, disgusting, bloated sot, if we have the spirit of Christ we shall weep over him, while we think of his crushed hopes, his blighted powers, his wasted opportunities, his baseness, treachery and dishonor. Especially in such cases will our heart be softened into pity, when we reflect that if we had been born with the same nature, and placed in the same circumstances, we should have been precisely what they are. We ought to feel, and I say it in the most unqualified language, that however good we may be, it is nothing but the grace of God that makes us to differ from the worst persons living.

Good men, as they are called, are often puffed up with the feeling that they are better before God than their wicked neighbors. They occupy a high position in society, and have preponderant weight and influence among their fellow men. No one can

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say anything to their dishonor. Their robes are unstained. Therefore, perhaps, in consequence, they look down with scorn upon a poor, degraded neighbor; "pass him by with a lofty step, and draw up the folds of their garment around them, that it may not be soiled by his touch." Nothing can be more offensive to God, than this spiritual pride that says, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." An enlightened Christian will always feel, that in the sight of God, the universe does not contain a sinner that needs more mercy and grace than himself.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE TEACHINGS OF SCRIPTURE CONCERNING PUNISHMENT.

THE doctrine that God will recompense men for all the moral evil which they commit in the present life, some time or other, and in some way or other, is universally admitted. A being endued with the power of perceiving and choosing what is right, is of course accountable for his actions. A belief in punishment, therefore, must be deeply founded in human nature. It is as essential to man as the attributes of thought, speech and reason. Experience and observation make it certain, that the different periods of human life—childhood, youth, mature years and old age—sustain to each other the relation of cause and effect. Or to vary my language, each successive act in this eventful drama of existence is so connected, that every after period of life, is colored and affected by every earlier period. Success in manhood is materially determined by one's antecedent conduct. Domestic happiness depends upon parental and conjugal wisdom, care and faithfulness. Character in its entire and most intimate nature, carries with it the principles of retribution, and works out weal or woe for its possessor. By character I mean the peculiar qualities which distinguish one person from another, whether said qualities have been acquired by habit, or impressed by nature. Indeed throughout eternity, the degree of happiness which we shall enjoy will depend upon our respective characters.

From time immemorial, in all climes as well as ages, it has been a proverbial saying that good people are happy; but that bad people however

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prosperous in external condition and circumstances, are by the eternal laws of their mental constitution wretched. The principle of gravitation, or the air we breathe, does not press upon us more constantly and inevitably, than that moral government of God, which "renders to every man according to his deeds." The law of retribution, though we may not be aware of the fact, like an invisible spirit, follows us through all the vicissitudes, ways, walks, fates and fortunes of our earthly career, with a step that never tires nor falters; with an eye that is never closed—"neither slumbers nor sleeps." "If we ascend into heaven it is there. If we make our bed in the recesses of the earth, behold it is there. Should we take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there its hand would be laid upon us. If we say surely the darkness shall conceal us, even the night shall be light about us. There is no darkness nor solitude where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves." There is no such thing as escaping the punishment of sin in the present life. The soul by repentance and faith, may find pardon and cleansing, and final salvation, but the consequences of its misdoings will pursue it even to the grave.

I heard these truths presented in a sermon not long since, nearly in the following terms: The State builds a prison for its criminals. It piles up the massive granite, and constructs its dismal cells, with narrow iron-grated windows. It hangs their iron doors with ponderous locks and hinges. And when the dreary abode is completed, it apprehends the transgressors of its laws, and shuts them up there. This is the best thing which the State can do.

But suppose now that the State had the power to cause the criminal's own house where he dwells with wife and children, to be transformed into a prison, and to become more and more a prison in propor-

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tion to his accumulating guilt. Suppose the windows gradually to contract, and the iron gratings to form over them, and the cheerful rooms to become cold, damp, and dark cells, and the criminal to have no power to escape therefrom after this dismal metamorphosis! How much more perfect would be the government, and how much more awful the penalty!

Now this is just what Providence does in regard to sinners. The body is the soul's dwelling place. And when the soul, by abusing and perverting the bodily or mental faculties, has incurred the penalty, it is self-inflicted. The beautiful dwelling, framed by the Infinite Architect, gradually changes into a filthy and miserable prison for the soul. It cannot escape from it. It must stay there, loathsome and dark as the dungeon is.

How many such prison-houses of human souls does one meet in the daily walks of life — beautiful structures — modeled with infinite skill to be pleasant and comfortable abodes of the indwelling spirits, but now how changed into dreary prisons! And how many among the young of a thronged city, are gradually changing the habitations of their souls into just such cheerless prisons! The glutton, the drunkard, the debauchee, if there were no retribution beyond the grave, are bringing upon themselves daily, an awful retribution here. The State never built a dungeon so dismal as that into which the man may be introduced by depraved passions.

Young man look at one of these transformed human bodies — one on which unrestrained vice has done its appropriate work, and say for what earthly consideration would you have your soul shut up in such a prison-house? Would you not prefer to go with a pure and healthy body to the cell of a granite prison, rather than be compelled to move about under the free light and air of heaven

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in such a prison-house as is the body of the inebriate or libertine? Believe it, the penalties which follow the commission of sin on earth are fearful and inevitable. No fugitive escapes the police of Divine Providence here. In a foreign land, in the throngs of a crowded city, and in the deepest solitude the moral government of the great Father searches out, seizes, and punishes all offenders. None of its laws are ever violated with impunity either here or hereafter. Even atheistical writers admit that, as a general fact, there is an elevation or depression among men in harmony with their intrinsic character and habitual conduct. But with respect to the nature, time, place, degree, and duration of punishment, almost innumerable, widely different and contradictory theories prevail. This is not a matter of surprise. For the wisest and best of men are not entirely unanimous in opinion with respect to any of the great and principal topics of law, education, religion or morals.

Is the doctrine of endless punishment taught in the Old Testament? Bishop Warburton, in his Divine Legation of Moses, affirms, "that the only sanctions spoken of, or alluded to in the Hebrew Scriptures, are temporal rewards and punishments merely. They make not the slightest reference to any future, or *post mortem* retribution for the sins committed this side the grave. Endless punishment is not taught in the Old Testament." This position is undoubtedly true. The idea is no where inculcated in the Pentateuch.

"Begin with the first sinner, and follow the long procession of transgressors downward, and you will not find a single intimation that any of them deserved, or were exposed to endless punishment. When our first parents sinned, we are assured that they suffered the punishment due to their disobedience on the very day of their wrong doing.

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The punishment of Cain, the first murderer, was expressly confined to the present state of his being. When the antediluvians were swept from the earth in consequence of incorrigible wickedness, there is not the slightest hint that the billows of everlasting suffering would roll over them. We read in Ezekiel 16th, that the captivity of Sodom itself shall cease, and she even shall be restored. In the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses professes to enumerate all the penalties which God himself had threatened the Israelites in case of stubborn disobedience and the most protracted unbelief and impenitence. But, we examine this eloquent discourse in vain to find any hint of a penalty extending beyond the present life. This is true as to every threat mentioned in the Old Testament."

The position above stated is acknowledged by the most learned Trinitarian Commentators. Milman says, "Moses maintains a profound silence on that fundamental article, if not of political, at least of religious legislation—rewards and punishments in another life. He substituted temporal blessings. "In the Jewish republic," says one of the greatest Biblical critics of the English Church, "both the rewards and punishments promised by Heaven were temporal only. In no one place of the Mosaic Institutes is there the least mention, or any intelligible hint, of the rewards and punishments of a future state." Arnauld, one of the luminaries of the Roman Catholic Church, declares: "It is the height of ignorance to doubt this truth—that the promises of the Old Testament were temporal and earthly, and that the Jews worshipped God only for earthly blessings." Dr. Paley affirms, "that the Mosaic dispensation dealt in temporal rewards and punishments only." To these I could append a long list of the ablest orthodox, Trinitarian divines of every denomination in Christendom, and all believers in

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endless punishment who have expressed the same decision. Not long since, in conversation with an American Bishop of the Catholic Church, he said, "that it is susceptible of absolute demonstration that punishment after death for the sins committed here is not once threatened in the whole compass of the Old Testament."

When I mentioned these facts to a Presbyterian gentleman, a few days ago, he remarked thus: "In the Old Testament, which I daily use, are to be found many passages like the following: 'The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death, &c.'" I replied: "All such texts are gross mistranslations. The corresponding word in the original is *Sheol*, and is, indeed, rendered hell in your Bible thirty-two times. But every Hebrew scholar in the world concedes that this term *Sheol* was never used by the Old Testament writers to signify a place of punishment for sinners after death. In Hebrew literature, the word, understood literally, always means *pit, grave, or the world of the dead.* In a figurative sense, it often signifies temporal *ruin, calamity,* or desolation. It is never employed in any other acceptation throughout the Old Testament. Moreover, the original word translated everlasting, eternal, or forever, is not connected in a single instance, I believe, with the word *Sheol* by the Old Testament writers. They never speak of an eternal *Sheol.*

Both in Europe and the United States I have had frequent opportunities of conversing with the most learned Rabbis of the Jewish persuasion. They have told me invariably that in their sacred books *Sheol* bears no other meaning than those just mentioned. What a conclusive fact! Suppose the English had ceased to be a living language—to be preserved only in books. Suppose, further, that in

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all the dictionaries and writings of this language, both sacred and profane, the word hell in the ordinary acceptation of the term could not be found—would it not follow as an infallible inference that the people who once used this language as vernacular, never entertained the idea, or belief in the reality of a place of endless punishment. The same remarks are applicable to the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, made by the most distinguished Jewish scholars of their day, about two hundred years before the commencement of the Christian era.

Further, the Hebrew Bible has not a single text, which (fairly interpreted) under any form of phraseology, addresses to the finally impenitent the menaces of everlasting perdition. It speaks of terrific curses which await those children of Israel who will not forsake their follies and disobedience to the laws of Moses, but they all consist of earthly pains and penalties. We cannot find so much as an allusion to the punishment of a disembodied sinner from Genesis to Malachi. Dr. Campbell, of Scotland, and Professor Stuart, of Andover, both avowed firm believers in the doctrine of future, interminable misery, pronounce it *to be very plain that neither in the Hebrew Old Testament, nor in the version of the Seventy, nor in the New Testament, does the word* SHEOL, *or the corresponding Greek term* HADES, *convey the meaning which the present English word hell, in the Christian usage, always conveys to our minds.* So far as I know there is not a divine or critic of any sect or nation familiar with the original Scriptures who does not concur in opinion on this subject with these distinguished scholars.

On hearing these remarks my Presbyterian friend said, with much warmth, "Then the Bible which I read and teach to my children is not to be depended upon as an unerring guide in religious matters. It

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does not contain unmixed truth—the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Our minister tells me that I must follow it implicitly. But, in that case, if what you say is true, I shall fall into fatal, essential, and fundamental errors. The book which I have prized so highly may deceive and mislead me as to the most important interests of my immortal soul."

He then propounded to me the following question: "If the doctrine of endless punishment is not taught in Scripture, how did it happen to become so extensively prevalent in the Christian world? If it is not in the Old Testament, where did it come from?" I answered these questions by quoting from memory, as nearly as I could (not having the book at hand), a sketch of the Rev. T. B. Thayer's statement in that admirable work, "History of the Origin of Endless Punishment."

This gentleman shows, by most authentic and copious references, that Christian divines have borrowed or stolen their principal ideas on this subject from Heathen writers, poets, and philosophers. Virgil and Horace contain numerous fables concerning Tantalus, Ixion, the fifty daughters of Danaus, Sisyphus, and many others whom they represent as experiencing pains in Tartarus (the world assigned for the abode of departed sinners), which exactly resemble those ascribed to the damned by the Christian poets Dante, Milton, Pollock, Trappe, Young, &c., and by such theologians as Tertullian, St. Augustine, Calvin, Turretin, Edwards, Flavel, Vincent, and a host of other men considered as luminaries in their day, and whose word had as much authority as the Bible itself.

But, it may be asked, where did the heathen obtain these notions? Inasmuch as they could not have procured them from the Hebrew Scriptures, had they enjoyed access thereto, and inasmuch as

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there was no other divine revelation in existence at the time these views originated, we require no plainer proof to show that they were human inventions. Undoubtedly this is the truth. An endless hell—positive suffering after death is a Pagan doctrine. It is matter of demonstration that it was in being—among the heathen—at least fifteen hundred years before the time of Christ. It originated with the heathen; it was exactly suited to them. Its aspect is dark, stern, cruel, and malignant enough to suit their depraved taste and habits.

Dr. Good, in his "Book of Nature," says: "Egypt is supposed to have been the inventress of this important and prominent part of tradition." The same opinion is established as true by the declarations of the most eminent heathen writers. Polybius says: "Since the multitude is ever fickle, full of lawless desires, irrational passions and violence, there is no other way to keep them in order but by the fear and terror of the invisible world, on which account *our ancestors seem to me to have acted judiciously when they contrived to bring into popular belief these notions of the gods, and of the infernal regions.* Livy praises Numa for inventing the fear of the gods. Strabo says: "The thunder, the regis, the trident, and the torches are all fables, as is the ancient theology. These things the legislators used as scarecrows to terrify the childish multitude." He also declares that "Plato and the Brahmins of India invented fables concerning the future judgments of hell." Plutarch calls them "fabulous stories, and tales of mothers and nurses." Seneca styles them "vain terrors." Another calls them "poetic fancies," and Cicero "silly absurdities and fables." Aristotle gives the following unequivocal testimony: "It has been handed down, in a mythical form, from earliest times, to posterity, that there are gods, and that the divine encompasses all nature.

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All besides this has been added for the purpose of persuading the multitude, and for the interests of the law, and the advantage of the State. These and a great many kindred facts, too numerous to be mentioned, show that the doctrine of hell or future punishment is a heathen invention.

"But," my friend replied, "in a sermon preached by our pastor last Sabbath, it was stated that the Pharisees and Scribes, and the great majority of the Jews, who were the contemporaries of our Saviour, believed in future everlasting woe." To this I returned the following answer: "Your pastor, in this particular, is right. But, what does the Son of God himself say concerning these same Pharisees and Scribes. He rebukes them for having made the Bible of none effect by substituting in the room of it the traditions of men. From his Sermon on the Mount we might collect a long list of these wretched superstitions. He condemns their theology in the strongest terms. How absurd, then, for Christian ministers to refer to it as authority."

"During the Babylonish captivity, and at other times when they had intercourse with the heathen, it is certain that they imbibed many of their errors. This is admitted by Prideaux, Lightfoot, Whitby, and many other Trinitarian divines. As it is a universally acknowledged fact among competent judges that the Old Testament, the only source of inspired truth, does not contain the doctrine, of course the Jews of our Saviour's time must, some how or other, have obtained it from their Pagan neighbors. There are four hundred years, at least, between Malachi, the end of the Old Testament, and Christ's nativity. During all this period there was no prophet in Israel, and the Jews were constantly mingling with Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, &c. It was at this time that they became so thoroughly corrupted as to need imperatively a new dispensa-

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tion of truth. The reader of Guizot, Tyler, Gibbon, and Enfield, cannot help seeing how gradually the Jewish theology acquired heathen notions, until, at the time of Christ, the belief in hell and endless punishment became very general among them. They did not get it from the Old Testament—the New was not in existence—the oral teachings of Jesus they utterly repudiated; they either obtained it, therefore, from the heathen, or it was an invention of their own gross and unhallowed minds. Hence, Christ declared, "Beware of the Scribes and Pharisees, because they teach for doctrines the commandments of men." This solemn declaration was often reiterated in the warnings addressed to his disciples, from time to time. And yet our orthodox friends do not hesitate to quote the traditions of these corrupt reprobates, as furnishing arguments in support of their peculiar faith."

Now, Jesus Christ repeatedly assured these Jews, of whom, it is affirmed, that they avowed and taught the doctrine of a *post-mortem* hell, that their Scriptures—the Old Testament—contained all that it was necessary for them to know, believe, and do, in order to attain eternal life. But we have seen that it utters not a syllable about hell, or a place of everlasting torture for the finally impenitent; that the only punishment it ever speaks of, or alludes to, consists of those sufferings which sinners endure this side of the grave. If there be such a place as hell, must it not have been mentioned in the volume which Jesus declares to be a complete, ample directory or guide in our endeavors to reach the mansions of immortal bliss? This question requires no answer. For thousands of years before the advent of our Saviour, the Jews enjoyed a divine communication from God himself, in which the Supreme Father professes to furnish them with a catalogue of all the evils to which they could expose them-

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selves by leading wicked lives. In this enumeration of evils no notice is taken of hell; consequently, if there be such a place, the authors of the Jewish Scriptures have imposed upon us a *tremendous fraud* —a fraud which must involve countless millions of our misguided race in eternal ruin. Moses connived at this suppression of important realities.

The fact is entitled to greater weight, on account of the universally acknowledged opinions of all the learned Egyptians on future retribution, among whom the Jewish legislator was born and reared. In his teachings he ignored the faith which was upheld by all the authority, wealth, rank, fashion, religion, literature and philosophy of his contemporaries throughout the most civilized nations of that age. If the Jews, dying in impenitence, were exposed to endless punishment, he should have told them so. But he said nothing about a penalty so awful, and the Son of God sanctioned his silence touching this matter. If there be a hell, then the Pentateuch must be one of the most deceptive, false and dangerous books that has ever been published. Yet, Jesus Christ calls it true, beneficient, holy, divine — an inspiration from God. Has the immaculate Redeemer connived at, sanctioned an amazing, most atrocious imposture?

But, in our day the advocates of this doctrine rely chiefly for its support upon the New Testament Scriptures. Yet the clergy of every name, who read the original New Testament, admit that there is but one word employed therein, to denote the place of future punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels. This term in the original is Gehenna, in our English version translated hell. It is not a Greek word. It cannot be found in any of the Greek classics. All agree that it is a proper name or noun, composed of the two Hebrew words GE and HINNOM — which signify *the vale or valley of Hinnom.*

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So we see the phrase is derived from the geography of ancient Palestine, and was applied to a dell in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, through which ran the brook Cedron, and had no more reference to a future state, than the phrases, valley of the Hudson, or, valley of the Connecticut, have at the present day.

The first mention of this place in the Bible is in Joshua 15 : 8. It was there that the cruel sacrifices of children were made by fire to the heathen god Moloch. The same place was sometimes called Tophet, (2 Kings, 23 : 10,) as is supposed, from the noise of drums, raised to drown the cries of helpless infants, as they were burning alive. *Toph* is the Hebrew word for drum. When king Josiah purged the land of idolatry, he desecrated this place; and it subsequently became the common receptacle of the rubbish and filth conveyed out of the city of Jerusalem; and the carcases of brutes, and the dead bodies of the most notorious criminals, were cast into the common heap. Fires were kept perpetually burning in this valley, that the mass of putrefaction accumulated there might be partially consumed; the worms, in the meantime, reveling in their luxurious repasts, until driven away or destroyed by the heat. It is obvious that to the mind of a Jew, in our Saviour's time, nothing could convey such a lively idea of utter wretchedness and abomination as this valley of Hinnom or Gehenna. (See Professor Stuart.)

It is worthy of remark that all the learned believers in endless misery concede the facts just stated. They all say that in the old Testament, Gehenna, or Tophet — (synonomous words) is used as emblamatical of three things. 1st. Literal punishment inflicted upon criminals who were put to death, and their corpses thrown into this awful place, to be destroyed. 2d. It was employed figuratively to

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express any great calamity or suffering. To be in Gehenna, in this sense is, to endure any great trouble or affliction in this world. 3d. It was made by the prophets, an emblem of the final destruction of the Jewish nation, and their expulsion from Palestine. But never, throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, does it refer to suffering after death, in the unseen, eternal state of existence. With regard to these facts there is no dispute among learned divines. I could give authorities that would fill a volume, if it were necessary. Parkhurst, an orthodox Trinitarian commentator, says, on the text, *Where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.* "Our Lord here alludes to the worms that continually prey on the dead carcases which were cast out into the valley of Hinnom or Gehenna, and to the *perpetual fire* there kept up to consume them." Lightfoot thus testifies, "Gehenna, where the worm dieth not and the fire shall not be quenched, is not a place of eternal misery in a future state, but in the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem." This accomplished scholar was a firm believer in endless punishment. Authorities of the same description might be multiplied to any extent.

Now all agree that our Saviour in his entire discourses and conversations on the subject of religion, adopted the idioms and usages of the Old Testament writers, except in those cases where a declaration to the contrary is made, either by implication or in express terms. That is, in other words, it is conceded on all sides that when Jesus spoke of Gehenna, he used the term in the Old Testament sense of that word, to signify calamities, or sufferings this side the grave, unless he himself, by explicit language, changed the import of the term so as to make it an emblem of eternal punishment.

It is contended that he did so by declaring that the punishment of the wicked will continue through

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an *everlasting* duration — or that it will last *forever*. So our translators have rendered the original word *aionios* which our Saviour applied to punishment. But the argument is defective on two accounts. First. The term *aionios* cannot be depended upon to prove *the endless duration of anything whatever*. Trinitarian and orthodox critics, without an exception, say that when the subject to which the adjective AIONIOS is *affixed, is not from its nature absolutely eternal, it must be understood as implying a limited duration*. This settles the whole dispute, for no one has ever undertaken to prove — no one can prove, that the punishment of sin is endless in the nature of things — by an absolute necessity.

It is said that the rebellious prophet was in the whale's belly *forever*, (Jonah 2: 6,) or as our translators would have it, throughout eternity. Now Jesus Christ tells us that this eternity was only three days in duration. Paul in his epistle to Philemon, speaks of Onesimus as an everlasting or eternal slave; meaning by the language, simply, that he would be in bondage to the day of his death. Here the term might designate a single hour only, or even but one moment. Instances of a similar usage abound in every part of the Bible. But it is superfluous to adduce them, for every divine in Christendom, who reads Scripture in the original, admits that the mere force of the word *olam* and *aionios* can never prove the interminable existence of anything. Be pleased to remember that Jonah endured an eternal punishment in the space of seventy-two hours. Literal suffering in the valley of Hinnom is often called everlasting. This fact is indisputable. I refer, of course, to the usages of language which prevail throughout the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. Those who peruse the word of God in the English language only, are led astray on this subject, unless their ministers are honest enough

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to keep them from being deceived. "If we would understand the Scriptures aright," says Bishop Lowth, "we must throw ourselves back to the time in which they were written, and as far as possible enter into the views and feelings and habits of the people to *whom* they were written, and become acquainted with their modes of speaking and the many qualifications and extent of the phraseology which they used." Almost all the errors in the theological world at the present day, are undoubtedly to be ascribed to the want of a thorough, complete acquaintance with the dictionary of the original Bible.

Second. The most conclusive arguments show that the New Testament writers could not have applied the term *aionios* to punishment, to express the idea that it will be eternal. I will mention some of them. 1st. Jesus Christ himself declares that the Father sent him into the world, not to condemn the *world*, but that the world through him might be saved. Commentators admit universally that the term world, in this text, means the whole human race. Again, he says that God has given him power over all mankind, that he should give unto them eternal life. The apostles invariably teach that Jesus suffered death to effect the salvation of every man. Can the purposes of our Saviour's mission fail? Must he not accomplish the whole work which God has given him to do? Can the counsels of the eternal one be frustrated? Does he not often say, "The designs of my heart shall stand forever, and I will do all my pleasure?" Does he not solemnly declare: "It is my pleasure that all mankind should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved?" Jesus Christ told the Jews that he came not to do his own will, but the will of his Father, and that it was the Father's will, that not one of those who had been given to him should be lost. How many were

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given to him? *He tasted death for every man. Thou hast given me power over all flesh,* (all mankind.)

2d. The New Testament affirms that all mankind shall be raised from the dead, both *just and unjust, good and bad;* and that in the *resurrection state* there will be no sin, no death, or pain. It asserts that after death, (some time or other, sooner or later,) all the race shall be changed from sin to holiness; from dishonor to glory; from weakness to power; from the natural to the spiritual state; from corruption to incorruption; from the earthly to the heavenly; and from mortality to immortality. (Acts 24: 15. Mark 12: 24th to the 28th. 1 Cor. 15th from 22d verse to the close of the chapter. Romans 8: from 19 to 23. Romans 5: from 15th verse to the end. Phili. 2: 6 to 11.) Many other texts of a similar character might be cited. These and numerous parallel passages assert in plain, simple, literal, natural, obvious, direct and most unequivocal phraseology, that all the human family shall one day be raised to a state of immortal holiness and happiness. What then becomes of the doctrine of eternal woe?

3d. The word Gehenna occurs but twelve times in the whole Gospel. All concede that in two of these instances the term had no reference to a future state. So that, strictly speaking, there are but ten texts containing the word rendered hell, on which the advocates of endless misery can pretend to rely to substantiate their favorite dogma. These were all uttered by our Saviour, and are recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Eight of them are addressed to the twelve disciples exclusively. Only twice did the Son of God use the phrase *gehenna* in all those discourses and communications addressed to the Jews at large; and in each of these cases, as I believe he employs the word as an emblem of the temporal calamities, which were about to be visited upon their metropolis, temple, and nation. How-

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ever this may be, it is agreed on all sides that from Luke to the end of the New Testament, the word gehenna is found but once, and that there it has no reference whatever to future retribution. During the first forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus, the apostles preached the Gospel, and established churches all over the populous parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe. We have a history of Paul's prayers, letters, discourses, and conversations among the ignorant and corrupt inhabitants of Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, Rome, and other ancient cities of the same age. In this history, the word hell does not occur in a single instance, nor any synonymous terms and phrases, that plainly teach the dogma of future, everlasting wrath. But if there is in the unseen world a place of endless misery to which those who die impenitent are to be sent, he should have announced the fact in every sentence which he uttered, as is the case with modern preachers of eternal vengeance.

4th. All grant that our prayers in the closet, in the family, as well as in the church should be harmonious with our actual belief, as to the teachings and spirit of Christ. It is beyond dispute that our Saviour and his apostles prayed for the salvation of the whole human race. Who will take the ground that they offered daily prayers for what they taught and knew absolutely was repugnant to the will of heaven? Is it not our duty as Christians, perpetually to offer the petition — *Thy will be done.* "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin," affirms Scripture.

Let me present an imaginary case. You are a father. Last week you lost an only son — a notorious profligate — cut down amidst the perpetration of an enormous crime — in the very act. He had not a moment for repentance. His last breath was employed in uttering a most horrid, impious oath. You say that you believe in the endless misery of

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all those who die in impenitence. Could you this morning, after leaving church, go out to yonder cemetery, and kneeling down at the fresh grave, utter the following prayer:

"Heavenly Father, if my dear child died unregenerate, I beseech thee that he may be punished forever; let him be a wretched outcast from God and paradise throughout eternity; let no ray of hope ever reach him; let no night afford him refreshing repose; let no returning morn of beauty bring him peace, respite or gladness; let unavailing sighs pierce the silence of his dungeon; and from beneath the smoke of his unending torment, let wailings, weeping, and gnashing of teeth be heard forever and ever! These infinite favors I implore in the name of Jesus Christ, our most blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen."

If you cannot offer this prayer from the bottom of your heart, then your profession of faith is falsehood, sin, and hypocrisy. Be pleased to reflect upon this test attentively. To see your only, and tenderly beloved son, however wicked he might have been, stretched for one night on the rack, or over the slow fires of an inquisitorial vengeance, would be an insupportable trial—would be enough to destroy your reason and life itself. Let your imagination dwell on one such night. What to the agonized victim would be its horrors? What its duration? What? Like ages would appear its moments. The wheels of time would seem to move not; the morning star to stand still; and the sun, which brings back the day, to have set to rise no more. Yet this is not hell. Nor are these the pains of hell. What are twelve hours compared with an unwasting eternity? Interminable sufferings! All the nameless and aggravated miseries which the universe has yet endured are nothing in comparison. We might count the sands, we might

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estimate the rays of light which proceed from the stars and number them, but the dreadful sum of eternal pains no finite minds could number, if they were to be employed forever in solving the problem. It swells beyond our powers of comprehension. It displays dimensions that mock our most vigorous efforts. It assumes a vastness that absorbs our largest thoughts. Can any one pray sincerely that such evils may be inflicted on the worst sinner that has gone down to the congregation of the dead? Impossible! Do you really believe, reader, that any person in "this frail and feverish being of an hour" can contract guilt enough to deserve such an unimaginable, terrific retribution. Again, I say impossible! Do you believe, reader, that the all-glorious Creator, who is infinite love, could place a child in such a world, with such a nature, and under such circumstances, as would expose him to the peril of endless pain, either bodily or mental? Impossible! There is not a minister within the wide pale of Christendom who can pray for endless damnation. Impossible! The demonstrations of Euclid, then, are not more certain than that no minister can believe this doctrine, however strenuously he may advocate it in his preaching. A clergyman is in honor and consistency bound to pray for the advancement of the truth which he inculcates. And if he announces doctrines which he himself cannot even wish to be true, is not his course as a teacher utterly inconsistent and preposterous?

If the doctrine of eternal woe is not taught in Scripture, why do so many preachers enforce it as an essential item of Christianity? I would reply that a vast majority of those ministers in the United States who are styled orthodox, have never gone into a thorough and elaborate investigation of the Scriptures relating to this topic. They have gene-

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rally been trained under sectarian influences, and feel under solemn obligations to support the sentiments of some particular denomination. Indeed, they are impelled to do so by the imperative influence of a most sacred oath, which young candidates for the ministry should never be required to take, for it is a virtual promise that they will uphold certain theological views through life, although they may become fully convinced that such views are false, dangerous, and unscriptural. A clergyman once said to me, "I believe as you do on this subject, but I cannot say so from the pulpit without sacrificing my good name; my standing in the church; even the very means of subsistence for myself and family." It demands a greater sacrifice than some ministers are willing to make, to venture, with free, unprejudiced, and unembarrassed minds, upon the pursuit of pure Biblical truth, and upon the rejection of what human philosophy has wrongly added to the Sacred Writings. It is, indeed, a severe trial for a minister to be placed where he cannot express his honest convictions of truth and duty without exposing himself to the bitterest persecution. But, if so situated, he should be encouraged to pursue the right course, by reflecting on the example of Jesus Christ, who endured a world's scorn, wrath, and hatred, and at last the agonies of an ignominious death to seal the truth which he taught.

There is another class of ministers who are most good, true, faithful, and conscientious men, entitled to the most cordial respect and confidence of their several congregations, that admit the dogma of future everlasting punishment for all dying in a state of impenitence, because they honestly think that it is laid down in the most explicit, unequivocal terms, in many texts scattered throughout the New Testament. Within the last thirty years I have repeatedly

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examined every passage and paragraph which has been adduced in support of endless punishment in the original, and I am prepared to assert, with perfect confidence, that the countenance which they seem to give to the doctrine in question, arises entirely, from what, to my mind, are undoubted misunderstandings and perversions of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. In our translation, some texts seem to assert that those who die in their wickedness will never be reformed and made happy. But, in reality, all these passages are misinterpreted. We have seen that the word *hell*, in the sense of a place of suffering in a future state, does not occur in a single instance, either in the Hebrew of the Old, or the Greek of the New Testament. Of course the term is wrongfully inserted fifty-five times in our English Bible. Correct these errors, or only leave the momentous words *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* untranslated, and the delusions which prevail on this solemn theme would soon be banished from the religious world, and honest minds be no longer deceived as to the true import of Scripture. In my next chapter I shall notice some of the mistranslations alluded to, and commend them to the attention of those clergymen who would not knowingly and deliberately keep up a system of theology by the help of *pious frauds*.

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CHAPTER VII.

AN EXAMINATION OF SOME OF THE ERRONEOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF SCRIPTURE WITH RESPECT TO FUTURE RETRIBUTION.

Of these misinterpretations I shall have space to review only such as are deemed to possess the greatest importance, and convey the strongest evidence in support of the doctrine of future and eternal woe.

As preliminary to this part of my discussion, I must notice the peculiar meaning of two forms of phraseology which pervade the New Testament. First, the phrases "kingdom of heaven," or simply "kingdom," and "heaven," are synonymous in the discourses of our Saviour and his apostles. Each of these phrases was used to signify the time of the Messiah, or the reign on earth, of that spiritual kingdom which Christ established, and of which he was the head. It is generally called at this day, the mediatorial reign of Jesus. For example: Christ says, "Be ye sure of this that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you." "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"— that is, the introduction of that reign which Christ came to institute over his disciples, who were to obey him as good and loyal subjects obey a temporal monarch. Cruden, a rigid Presbyterian, defines the phrase as follows: "The state of the church, or gospel in this world," — or, "the grace of God in the soul."

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"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which becomes a great tree;" it is "like leaven which a woman put in two measures of meal, until the whole was leavened;" it is "like a treasure hid in the field," or, "like a goodly pearl of great price, which a man finding, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea,' &c.; it is "like unto a man which sowed good seed in his field," &c. "Many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven," &c. When shall this happen? "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in *his kingdom.*"

It is indubitable, therefore, that the state called the "kingdom;" "kingdom of God;" "kingdom of heaven;" "kingdom of Jesus," or simply "heaven," in the New Testament, commenced when some of the contemporaries of our Saviour were living 1800 years ago. This kingdom is still flourishing, and Paul tells us in 1st Cor. 15, from the 22d to the 28th inclusive, that it will not cease until all mankind shall be redeemed from sin and death; be made holy, happy, and immortal. Beza, Calmet, George Campbell, Doddridge, Gill, Grotius, Horne, Lardner, Leighton, Lightfoot, Macknight, Poole, Theophylact, Adam Clarke, Wetstein, Whitby, Professor Stuart, with others too numerous to be mentioned — all Trinitarians and believers in endless misery,— give that interpretation of the phrase "kingdom of heaven," which has been just specified.

Wherever then, good men live, who obey God and see him and enjoy the blessedness of communion with him, they are in heaven — the only

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heaven, as I think ever spoken of in the Gospel. Wherever purity, truth, love, obedience prevail, there is God and that is heaven. Heaven according to Christ's use of the term, is not distinctively a future world situated somewhere in illimitable space, but a purely spiritual experience, which may be attained on earth. It is the state of the soul, or state of society, under the rule of divine truth, and governed by God's will through Jesus in the present life—this side of the grave. It is not a bounded place of abode, but a true condition of character, a virtuous mode of life. Jesus said to the young ruler who had faithfully obeyed the decalogue, and whose beautiful traits drew forth his love: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." "My kingdom is spiritual." "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice"—that is, "my kingdom is the realm of truth, the dominion of God's will; and all good men are my subjects. It is not material, but moral, and therefore extending through all the epochs and eras of time. Wherever God is, there is the kingdom of heaven. But He is an Omnipresent Spirit, the Infinite Holy One, whose perfections pervade illimitable space and endless duration. He is on the very dust we tread, he is the very centre of our souls, and breath of our lives, if we will only keep our minds in a state that is fitted to recognize, and enjoy him."

"He that hath sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone, *for I always do the things which please him.*" Memorable words! Glorious the sentiment they enforce! They teach indubitably, that they who with conscious adoration and love endeavor to do those things that please God, although on earth, are at the same time in heaven, and enjoy the communion and blessedness of eternal life.

I repeat it, let all bear in mind that the "kingdom

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of heaven," — "the better dispensation which Christ came to establish, is the humility of contrite hearts, the innocence of little children, the purity of undefiled consciences, the fruit of good works, the truth of universal laws, and the conscious experience of an indestructible, blessed existence, this side the grave. Those who enter into these qualities in faith, in feeling, and in action, are full citizens of the eternal kingdom; all others are alienated from it. Hence, the New Testament phrases, "To be born again, both of water and the spirit;" "to be saved;" "to taste of everlasting life," "to enter into life;" "to have life abundantly;" "to become members of the kingdom," and all analagous forms of speech, is simply to renounce all impurity and wickedness, to be brought into a new and divine life of holiness; to be awakened to a conscious experience of purity, truth and love — the great prime elements in the reign of God. Jesus says, "he that believeth on me *now* hath everlasting life,"—is *now* in heaven.

Jesus addressing the Pharisees uses these words, "The children now in the kingdom (the Jews) shall be cast into outer darkness." The sense of this text has been thus paraphrased: "God is now offering unto you, through me, a spiritual dispensation, a new kingdom; but unless you faithfully heed it, and fulfil its conditions, you will be discarded and lose the divine favor. Although by your position as the chosen people, and in the line of revelation you are its natural heirs, yet unless you purify your hearts, and live by its commands, you shall soon see the despised Gentiles enjoying all the privileges your faith secured to the revered patriarchs of your nation, while you yourselves are shut out from them and overwhelmed with shame and anguish. Your pride of descent, haughtiness of spirit, and reliance upon dead rites, unfit you for the true kingdom of God — the inward reign of humility and

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righteousness — and the very publicans and harlots (the worst of sinners) will become my disciples before you."

A person ignorant of the above-named exegesis cannot understand the discourses of Christ and the apostles, and his views of Christianity will be material, childish, gross, erroneous and contradictory. As "to be born again," "to enter into life," or "to be saved," in the New Testament, always designates the happiness which accrues to us in this life, from receiving, obeying, and loving the truth of Christ, so the antithetic phrases, to be in "gehenna," (or hell) "to be cast into outer darkness where are weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth;" "to be placed among the goats on the left hand;" "to be devoured by an everlasting fire," denote the miseries of unbelief, darkness and sin in the present life. They are never in a single instance applied to signify *post mortem* suffering in a future immortal world. The proof of this position will be noticed in the sequel.

There is another phrase of great importance, not understood by those who read the Bible in our English version only. In the Gospel these forms of speech—"Neither in this world, nor in that to come," are never of the same import with the words, "*Neither in time, nor in eternity*," yet, they are so understood by a vast majority of unlettered Christians. The Jews called the Mosaic dispensation, when our Saviour was alive, the "present world," or "state." By the phrase "future world," or "world to come," the time or reign of the Messiah on earth was expressed. Jesus Christ employed this language in its usual, or popular acceptation. When it is said such and such things shall take place at the end of the "world," this term means at the end of the Jewish dispensation. That the word often bears such an import in the Gospel, no one denies, who reads it

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in the original tongue. The Son of God in foretelling the coming destruction of Jerusalem, in conflagration and massacre, with the irretrievable overthrow of the old dispensation, uses words like the following: "When the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, with his holy angels, and all nations are gathered before him, then shall he sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Now this picturesque passage, with two or three others of a resembling character, has led to the general belief in a great world-judgment at the end of time, after which the condemned are to be thrown into the tortures of a perdition where "the worm dieth not, and the flame is unquenchable." But here our Saviour is not speaking of what shall happen at the end of time, literally understood, but at the end of the *Jewish age*. His coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and glory, was when, at the destruction of Jerusalem, the old age closed and the new began; the obstacles to his religion were removed, and his spiritual throne established on the earth. This is certain, because Jesus says to his hearers, "There are some of you standing here who shall not taste death till this judgment be fulfilled"—till you see that I am indeed, the Messiah, and that through the eternal principles of truth which I have proclaimed, I shall be seated upon a throne of glory, —not literally in person, as you thought, blessing all the Jews and cursing all the Gentiles, but spiritually, in truth, dispensing joy to good men, and woe to bad men, according to their deserts. Throughout the Old Testament, the temporal calamities to be inflicted by heaven upon the wicked, are foretold under the same imagery employed by the Saviour to predict the destruction of the Jewish nation, with their city and temple, by the Roman armies.

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Everywhere the Hebrew Scriptures use the words "being judged by God," "being cast into a fiery furnace," "being thrown into a world where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched," &c., to signify suffering brought upon the ungodly, which begin and end this side the grave. In the New Testament they must be construed as bearing the same import.

Our Saviour spoke to the Jews in their own language—a language which to them was plain and intelligible enough, but which in our day has, in some respects, become obscure and needs explanation. The Bible is an ancient book; parts of it have come down to us from a remote antiquity; and the most recent portions of it are now nearly eighteen hundred years old. It was written, too, not only in languages foreign to us, with oriental figures and idioms which appear in our eyes strange, affected, extravagant, and far-fetched, but also under another sky, amidst scenery unlike our own—amidst circumstances, customs, and habits, both of thought and life, unfamiliar to occidental literature, and with which we must make ourselves acquainted before we can fully understand and appreciate the teachings of the New Testament.

With these prefatory remarks, I shall now proceed to the main subject of this chapter—the erroneous interpretations relied upon, to establish the doctrine of endless punishment. I begin with Mark 16:16—"He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." There is not, I am fully persuaded, another text supposed to refer to the destinies of the human race, so generally misunderstood as this, by all those who are acquainted with the Bible only through the medium of our English translation. Go and ask a little boy, eight or ten years old, belonging to any orthodox Sunday school—What is the meaning of Mark 16:16?

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He will reply without the slightest hesitation (for he has learned the answer by rote), "It means that all those who die without faith in Christ will be sent to hell, and doomed there to suffer an eternal punishment." Learned, eloquent, and pious divines in the sacred desk, coincide with the little boy in their exegesis of this passage. The apostle Paul says, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Happy would it be for the cause of Christianity, if all clergymen were to follow the example of Paul in this particular—if, on arriving at mature years, they would repudiate the nursery tales and absurd fables which they received for truth, in the undiscerning period of childhood. It is sad to see a full-grown, fine-looking man, dealing out from the pulpit those puerilities which should have been abjured forever in the period of youth.

Our standard of faith is the teaching of Jesus Christ—his whole teachings, and nothing but his teachings. To me there is scarcely a more melancholy sight than that of a minister of great learning and power laboring in his pulpit, intentionally, to throw a cloud over—to conceal, dilute, or fritter away the simple, plain, and solemn declarations of the gospel, in order to gratify a sin-loving and pleasure-seeking audience. It is a deplorable state of things, also, in that society in which a minister cannot be honest in expounding Scripture—cannot point out a popular misapprehension as to the Bible without being set down as one of its notorious enemies—as being no better than an infidel, or Deist in disguise. Although it is admitted by all educated divines in the land, that King James' translation of the Bible contains thousands of errors, yet, if a minister ventures to say so in the pulpit, the whole body of the clergy combine to assail and destroy his reputa-

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tion. They immediately sound the tocsin of alarm, and endeavor to persuade ignorant and prejudiced votaries that the preacher who asserts that our English Bible is erroneous in a single jot or iota is stealthily attempting to subvert Christianity itself—to weaken, and finally to efface the strongest motives which persuade men to repent and become holy.

But, in the face of all these perils, I must deny the very popular doctrine that our Saviour intended to lay down in Mark 16: 16, the only and immutable conditions of eternal life, or eternal death for all mankind. A sound interpretation of Scripture is one of the most important and arduous duties which devolve upon the teachers of Christianity. Such an interpretation is not an arbitrary procedure, subject to the wild fancies, whims, or theories of sectarians, but is directed and determined by laws as definite as those of the English grammar, or any other spoken language of the present day. These laws are agreed to and recognized by all the educated clergymen of every denomination in Christendom.

One of the first and most obvious of these rules is the following: "In explaining a single, detached, insulated text, we must take care not to give it an import which will make the Bible contradict itself, or which clashes with the universally acknowledged and undisputed doctrines of revealed religion." Let us apply this rule to the case before us. It is conceded by nearly every school of divines that the mission and atonement of Jesus Christ have placed all mankind in what is technically called a *salvable* state; that is, all the obstacles to their final and everlasting happiness have been thereby so far removed that heaven is now accessible to each of the human race; or, in other words, it is explicitly and repeatedly affirmed in Scripture, that all mankind through Christ can be delivered from sin, suffering, and mortality. But that interpretation of

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the text which I deny, declares, virtually, that a large part of mankind *cannot be saved* by Christ. Here we have a flat contradiction. How so? one may inquire. I reply, the usual exegesis of Mark 16:16, makes the Son of God say that none will ever reach heaven but those who exercise faith in him this side eternity. Now, it is admitted that at least one-third of our race die in infancy. Multitudes are born, live, and die idiots. But none of these can believe in Christ any more than a bird, tree, or flower could. But, it is suggested that the mercy of God will save the above-named classes, though they enter eternity without faith. So I most fully believe. Yet this is contrary to the theory which says the present world is the only probationary state allotted for man, and that no one will ever be prepared for admission to the kingdom of heaven beyond the grave. Again, let us call to mind the terrible fate which the aforesaid interpretation assigns to the innumerable millions belonging to the Pagan world, who, like successive waves, have crossed this strange theatre of being between Adam and the flood, and during the subsequent ages up to our day. Think how many more are destined hereafter to share a similar destiny. Let us ponder the highest Evangelical authority on this point.

It is asserted in an article lately published by the most enlightened Trinitarian clergymen at the north, composing the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, that *six hundred millions of heathen* go down to eternal death every thirty years, or thereabouts; seventy-three thousand *every day;* about three thousand *every hour;* thirty-five *every minute;* and one every *two seconds.* According to this horrid, blasphemous estimate, thousands of our fellow beings are every hour thrust upon that damnation to which there is no end, by an omnipotent Father, and simply for not believing in a

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Saviour of whom they had never heard. Could the wildest inmates of a lunatic asylum conjure up a phantasy more monstrous, more repugnant to the perfections of the great Creator? And yet this shocking representation is pronounced from Dan to Beersheba, a sound and wholesome doctrine—the most glorious feature in the gospel of the meek, loving, and merciful Saviour. And every fledgling in the orthodox ministry is held to rise in the attainments of piety in proportion to the vehemence with which he thunders forth the anathema—*He that believeth not shall be damned.*

Besides, we are assured in the same document that in the most enlightened, favored portions of Christendom, not more than one in ten, or at least one in eight of those who have arrived at the competent age, make a credible profession of religion. The remaining nine-tenths sink down to endless sorrow. More, we are informed by the same authorities, that a great many bad people get into the church and assume the garb of religion merely as a cloak to hide their wickedness with. All these, too, must be deducted from the sum total of the finally saved. How inconsiderable, on this theory, is the fraction left? If these things be so, who has triumphed, God or Satan? Is there a man living who can look this appalling conclusion fairly in the face, and reason himself into the belief of it?

Once more, the New Testament affirms that the redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ, is the most affecting display of divine benevolence which the intelligent universe will ever behold. The angels of heaven peal their loudest anthems of praise when contemplating and admiring the wondrous scheme of redeeming mercy. But, if the view of Mark 16:16, which I am criticising, be the true gospel, then it ignores completely the words announced by an angel, to the shepherds of

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Bethlehem, on the eve of our Saviour's nativity: "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to *all people*—to all mankind." Yet, according to the usual, popular exegesis of this text, *no one* can look upon it with joy—for amid the almost universal wreck and hopeless ruin of our common humanity, no reflecting person can feel anything like a comfortable assurance that he himself will ultimately reach the realms of immortal day.

Is this, indeed, a display of matchless grace, to ordain a remedial system for the recovery of man, which, by its necessary, inevitable laws, must fix the vast majority of the human race in eternal opposition to Heaven and happiness? Should the master of a vessel pass by a perishing ship at sea, and rescue but one soul out of the hundred on board, when he might with perfect ease have saved the whole, would he not be justly considered in the light of a murderer? God, in pity, beheld the race of man tossed on the billowy sea of ruin, and, for relieving an inconsiderable portion of them when he could have delivered all, the intelligent universe is called upon to celebrate in loftiest strains of wonder, delight, and thanksgiving, the riches of his boundless love. Positively, I can see nothing glorious, nothing godlike, in such an interposition as this.

The position that none will be admitted to immortal happiness but those who exercise true faith in Christ before they die, is also inconsistent with another class of texts, with respect to whose import there can be no controversy: viz—"We see Jesus, who was crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God *he should* taste death for *every man*." "He is the propitiation not only for the sins of believers, but also *for the sins of the whole world*—all mankind." The Father loveth the Son and hath given him power over *all flesh*,"—all mankind,—for every commentator concedes that

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flesh here means mankind. "All that the Father hath given me *shall come unto me*, and he that cometh unto me *I will in no wise cast out.*" "Because the *creature*" (all mankind, according to Professor Stuart, of Andover, and other Trinitarian critics,) "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." "As in Adam all die, even so all shall be made alive *in Christ.*" The phrase to *be in Christ* throughout the New Testament, always means to be holy — to be one of the Saviour's blessed, immortal friends and followers. "If any man is *in Christ*, he is a new creature," — a saint. "There is, therefore, no condemnation to them who are in CHRIST JESUS."

In these and numerous other passages of a similar import, which are so well known, that it is unnecessary to produce them: we are told in the most unambiguous terms possible, that the Son of God will make forever holy and happy all for whom he died: and with equal explicitness, that the object of his death and mission was to deliver the entire race of man from mortality, sin and suffering. The work which Jesus came into the world to do, must certainly be accomplished. This is undeniable. It is agreed on all sides, that no one can be finally happy without faith in Christ. It follows as a necessary consequence, that those interpretations of Scripture, by whatever arguments, eloquence, or ingenuity supported, which consign all who die unrenewed and impenitent to hopeless and endless unbelief, are directly at variance with the most undoubted teachings of the New Testament. "I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me; He hath given me all mankind, and it is his will, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." But he cannot possibly accomplish the Father's will, if

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all who die sinners are doomed to eternal perdition. "We should never," say all interpreters, "make a *figurative* expression used in the most *figurative* book extant — the Bible — the foundation of doctrines essential to the faith and hope of the Christian world." And "when literal and figurative expressions are applied to the same subject, the literal must always be allowed to determine the import of the figurative, or take precedence of it." That is, the figures of the Bible must never be so explained as to contradict those texts which are universally understood in their plain, simple, literal, natural, most direct, obvious and original import. Paul asserts "that there shall be a resurrection of all the dead, both of the just and unjust." This is plain language, and no figurative expressions of the Gospel can be justly so interpreted as to contradict it. Jesus Christ affirms that in the resurrection state "all shall be the *children of God*, and *as the angels which are in heaven*"—free from sin, pain, and death. This is literal, and no figures of speech can cancel, modify, or subvert its natural and most obvious import.

With these facts before me, I am compelled to reject that interpretation of Mark 16: 16, which is adopted by orthodox Christians generally. "He that believeth shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." It is self-evident that the sentiment of the whole passage depends on the meaning of the two words "SAVED," and "DAMNED." Now let us see what significations these terms bear in the Greek Dictionary of the New Testament, the only conclusive authority, recognized by all Protestant divines in their discussions with respect to the doctrines of Christ. In Robinson's Lexicon, the work of a Trinitarian, and which is of the highest repute at Andover and Princeton, the Greek word rendered saved in our New Testament is often used in the original to denote deliverance from merely

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temporal evils. Let us look at some of its different meanings.

First, It is employed to express preservation from any outward, physical destruction or peril whatever. Thus, the narrow escape of a person from being burnt to death, from drowning, shipwreck, or similar casualties, is called a *salvation.* Secondly, it serves to express the idea of convalescence — restoration from sickness to health. When the diseased and infirm were miraculously cured by our Saviour, it is said in the original that they were *saved;* meaning simply that they were healed or delivered from bodily infirmities. Thirdly, it designates the condition and the happiness enjoyed in this world by those who sincerely believe the gospel and live accordingly. Throughout the Greek New Testament, the disciples of Christ are called the *saved* ones. In Acts 2: 47, we read: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as *had been saved.*" This is the true rendering according to Adam Clarke, Rosenmuller, Professor Stuart, and many other expounders of the most distinguished abilities, in sacred criticism. So in Titus 3: 5, Paul says, "According to his mercy he *saves* us, — makes us *believers in Christ.* In Acts, 10th and 11th chapters, it is reorded that Peter was sent to Cornelius, a devout man, who was already pious and accepted of God, to tell him words whereby he might be *saved;* that is, introduced to the noble principles, sublime, unbounded benevolence and transcendent hopes of the Christian system: not to deliver him from a future endless woe, with regard to which he was already saved. In the Greek Scriptures the word *saved* in some of its grammatical forms occurs, I believe, more than fifty times. Yet the mere English reader of the Bible refers them all, without a doubt or scruple, to express the final destinies of men in the world eternal. Not in a single instance, as I feel assured, is the Greek verb,

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corresponding to our term *saved* used by Jesus or his apostles, except in one of the three senses just named. But, however this may be, the facts above mentioned prove conclusively that the term *saved* in Mark 16: 16, does not, necessarily and absolutely, signify immortal happiness in the resurrection state. For Jesus Christ says frequently, "He that believeth is already *saved*— has passed from death and condemnation unto life. Indeed, in our Saviour's time, these words, the *saved* and the *damned*, were often synonymous with the phrases *believers* and *unbelievers*; though most commonly the term *saved*, signified the happiness of those who received and loved the truth of Christ, and the term *damned*, the sufferings endured by those who were estranged from the principles of evangelical faith, without any direct allusion to a future state.

Let us now direct our attention to the principle word in the last clause of Mark 16: 16, *damned*. According to the nomenclature of Christians generally, *to damn* means to sentence a sinner to everlasting punishment after death. But the corresponding Greek verb *katakrino* never bears such an import in the New Testament. No! not in a single instance. I will quote a few Trinitarian authorities of the most convincing, unexceptionable character. Dr. George Campbell, of Scotland, a firm believer in endless misery, and one of the best scholars of whom any church can boast, says of Mark 16: 16, "This is not a just version of the Greek. It cannot be affirmed with truth that the Greek verb, *katakrino*, which corresponds to the English word condemn, ever relates to the doom which shall be pronounced upon the wicked at the last day." Bishop Horne, of the Episcopal Church, and a believer in eternal punishment, expresses himself on this text as follows: "The sanctions mentioned by our Lord in Mark 16: 16, though generally applied to a future state, do not

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appear to have any relation to it, but only to the admission of converts into the Christian Church, after Christ's ascension, upon the same terms as he admitted them himself. Jesus here, upon leaving the world, gives his apostles the same power which he himself exercised, and orders them to use it in the same manner."

Cappe, another learned divine of the English church, remarks —"The salvation spoken of in this text, is not salvation in a future life, but exemption from the wrath about to come on a large part of the Jewish people of that generation, for their unbelief. It is to faith that this salvation from temporal evil is promised; and on unbelief that this temporal condemnation is denounced. It has no relation to moral merit, and is addressed to the people of that age, and of that *age only*. The condemnation here expressed by the word *katakrino* or damned, was a present, *temporal* and *national* punishment merely, and has no reference to salvation in eternity." These were all staunch believers in endless punishment, yet they frankly acknowledge that the text before us, fairly interpreted, cannot be adduced in support of their favorite dogma. What follows in the 17th and 18th verses of Mark, 16th chapter, demonstrates that the terms *saved* and *damned*, which we are considering, have especial application to the men of that age, during which miraculous powers were bestowed on believers. For, it is alleged that those believing ones mentioned in the text, should be able to cast out demons, speak with new tongues, take up serpents and drink poison with impunity, and lay their hands on the sick and heal them. Now it is universally acknowledged that no such powers were ever bestowed upon any believers, except those who lived in the apostolic age. Consequently the text had reference to them alone, and cannot be

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considered as descriptive of the ultimate destinies of mankind in general, beyond the grave.

One of the distinguished authors above alluded to, gives the following paraphrase of this portion of Scripture. Jesus just before his ascension, addressing the small number of his disciples, (none besides them were present,) says: "Though I am now to be separated from you for a season, yet if faithful to the principles in which you have been instructed, you will be *saved*—be as safe and happy as you could be were I to remain personally present with you, instead of ascending to my Father; but if you repudiate the counsels which I have given you, and discard my authority, you will be condemned, (or *damned*, as our translators have rendered the Greek,) you too will be involved in the unparalleled guilt and calamities, which will soon sweep with the besom of destruction the Jewish city, temple and nation. But although spoken particularly to the disciples, these words, doubtless, were intended for believers generally, belonging to that age."

So that in reality the famous declaration of Mark 16: 16, has no more relation to the fates of men in the unseen world, than the first verse of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." If such are the facts of the case, should they not be stated from every pulpit in Christendom? I have heard some good men question the expediency of such a course, on the ground that it is dangerous to disturb the old, time-hallowed opinions of the common people concerning the threats of Scripture. But such are my views of clerical fidelity and honor, that the most sacred, imperative obligations rest upon me, to tell my hearers plainly all that I know about the teachings of Christ and his apostles. I do not doubt the sincerity and goodness of those ministers who pursue a different course. But I

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cannot adopt their notions of expediency. They judge it best to give to every text relating to punishment an interpretation as alarming as it will possibly bear, though in some respects it be hyperbolical and erroneous, on the ground that sinners can be led to repentance only by exciting their fears of future woe. To appal the impenitent, texts are often quoted by the pulpit, as belonging to Scripture, which cannot be found in the Bible. For example: "As death leaves us, so the judgment will find us;" "After death there will be no room for repentance;" and many others of a similar import, that have been manufactured to keep up one of the most absurd and debasing superstitions which human ingenuity has ever devised. But, supposing the words "he that believeth not shall be *damned*," were to be explained according to the usual, common, popular acceptation, still it would be of no avail towards proving the doctrine of endless punishment — for if one do not disbelieve forever, he cannot be punished forever. So admit the advocates of the popular theology. To accomplish their end, they must produce a class of texts which affirms in the most literal, plain, positive and unambiguous terms, that all who die in unbelief will continue hopelessly in a state of sin and unbelief throughout eternity — as long as the throne of God shall endure. I am fully persuaded that no such texts can be found in the Bible. I have never yet seen one. It is the summit of folly and presumption to rest a doctrine of such tremendous import on some figurative expression — on the strange, bold parables, or hyperboles of Oriental literature. It must be derived, if made out at all, from language which is of a signification perfectly clear, explicit, undisputed and indisputable.

One of the greatest mistakes as to Evangelical faith is the idea that it consists in a peculiar intellectual exercise, logical deductions, or subscription

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to a set of opinions called a creed. It is common for a teacher to say from his pulpit, after having proved, as he thinks, the correctness of certain doctrinal reasons and conclusions with respect to Christianity: "My dear hearers—listen to the awful declaration of the Son of God, 'he that will not embrace these truths which have been presented to you *shall be damned.*'" Now, I find nothing in the Bible to justify appeals of this kind. The uniform language of the Old Testament, as to the qualifications requisite to secure the approval of our Heavenly Father, runs thus: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God," making faith to be an attribute not of the head but the heart. In the same style our Saviour speaks: "The pure in heart shall see God." In Mark 7: 21, and onward, he teaches us that before God, all sin and all holiness are but states of the heart. So Paul declares: "With the heart man believeth unto salvation." Throughout the New Testament the same tenor of instruction prevails. Who needs to be told that one's head may be full of ignorance and errors as to theology, while his heart is enriched by divine grace—love of God, and love of man?

An old Pagan, who never heard of the gospel, says, in a letter which he wrote when over eighty years of age, "I can look back upon a long life devoted not to pleasure, wealth, or fame, but to the pursuits of a just and honorable life, and the improvement of my mind. I cannot remember the time when I would, intentionally, have done a wrong act, though certain that it were not possible for the punishment thereof to be inflicted upon me either by men or gods." How many exist in the Christian world, who have a standard of action equally pure and lofty? If this venerable heathen recorded a fact, he must have had that purity of heart in which

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consists the essence of Evangelical faith. It is said in the Acts, "that in every nation under heaven there are those who fear God, and work righteousness, and are accepted of him." Paul teaches the same doctrine in his epistle to the Romans. Yes, Evangelical faith is not a creed—a mere belief in dry dogmas—but a living, practical admiration of whatsoever things appear to any one to be just, pure, honest, lovely, and of good report."

How refreshing to turn away from the dry bones, the hideous, skeleton-like formulas of the dogmatic faith taught by theologians, to that which is inculcated by Christ and his apostles. The former is cold, abstract, metaphysical, absurd, and deformed. But what the New Testament writers call faith is simple, easy to be understood, noble, and godlike. Essentially it is the disposition to obey the following words of our Lord: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets," — that is the whole of practical Christianity. Faith is moral beauty. It is, therefore, commensurate with the vast extent of the Creator's mighty, amazing attributes and works. Like his own omnipresent Spirit, it cannot be confined within the walls of a church, the lids of a book, or the narrow boundaries of some inconsiderable, meagre, bigoted, starved, famishing sect. In the sublime language of inspiration, true faith "makes the clouds its chariot, and rides upon the wind." "It warms in the sun, sparkles in the stars," looks in beauty from the flower; runs in every stream; is instamped on every page of Nature; on every man's heart and conscience; on his intellectual and moral faculties, his spiritual nature, his undying sympathies, and everlasting hopes.

The fact is, theology on this and many other topics, is equally at variance with Nature and the

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Bible. From the days of St. Augustine it has ignored the dictates of reason, and denied the innate, the universal, and necessary convictions of our spiritual nature. It has always frowned upon improvement of every kind. It commanded Galileo not to believe nor teach the facts which he had learned by studying the heavens through the light of the telescope. This great man was loaded with irons, shut up in a dungeon, and treated like the worst of criminals, because he affirmed that the earth was of a globular shape, spun on its axis, and rolled round the sun. Theologians decided that this was a species of that unbelief in Christ, which exposes the soul to damnation. Yes, it was heresy then, to believe that our world revolves through the regions of space, in obedience to the mandate of its infinite Author. Nature affirmed that the earth rolled round the sun, the church, assembled in solemn conclave, declared that it stood still. But Nature has triumphed. It always will triumph sooner or later.

"Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers,
But error wounded writhes in pain,
And dies amidst her worshippers."

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CHAPTER VIII.

EXPOSITION OF MATTHEW 25 : 41.

WHEN the New Testament was first written, it was not divided into chapters and verses, and what are now the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of Matthew, formed one continued, unbroken, and uninterrupted discourse. The subject of this discourse is stated in the clearest terms. We are told by the inspired historian, that on a certain day, the Saviour with his disciples stood gazing upon that magnificent edifice — Solomon's temple. It was so massive and built of such unwasting materials, that it seemed capable of enduring forever. But Jesus said unto them, within a few years this temple will be overthrown, and so completely destroyed that not one stone shall be left upon another.

When they had retired to the Mount of Olives, the disciples asked him privately, "when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?" It is important to observe that the term world, respecting the end of which the disciples inquired, is not in the original "KOSMOS" which means the material world, but *aion* which signifies age, era, or dispensation. So that a correct translation of the question propounded, would run thus, "Tell us what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of this age, or the Mosiac

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dispensation? There is no reference here to the end of the human race, and the dissolution of the physical globe, as is very generally supposed. This is not denied by any clergyman who reads the Bible in the original. In reply to this question, Jesus uttered, without pausing, the entire discourse reaching from the fourth verse of the twenty-fourth, to the last verse of the twenty-fifth chapter in Matthew's gospel. Of course, if Matthew has not deceived us, the parable of the talents, the parable of the ten virgins, and that of the sheep and the goats refer to the termination of the Jewish age, the destruction of the temple, city and nation of the Jews, and the events which were to precede, accompany, and follow the ending of the Mosaic economy. Matthew does not intimate that any other subject was treated of in these two chapters, which in the original constitute one consecutive, uninterrupted strain of observations.

But Jesus Christ himself tells us in the most explicit language, both the time and place of the judgment represented in the parable of the sheep and goats. In the 34th and the 35th verses of the twenty-fourth chapter he uses these words: "Verily I say unto you this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." In the portion of Scripture immediately preceding these verses, our Saviour says, "In those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and all the tribes of the earth (the land of Judea) shall mourn, and see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Then he adds, "This generation shall not pass away till all the things which

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I am now uttering shall be fulfilled." In a parallel passage he says, "Verily there are some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his glory," &c. Can any one pretend that the judgment here spoken of relates to a general day of trial for the whole human race in the eternal world? Here we have the word of Christ himself, that his coming to judge, reward, and punish, as described in the parable of the goats and sheep, took place during the life-time of some who were listening to his words. Consequently they who assert that it is yet in the future, contradict the Son of God himself. If men will not believe Christ's own words, of what avail will be the voice of history, the laws of exegesis, the concurrence of a thousand probable circumstances, or the most powerful arguments that uninspired men can adduce? "Such persons would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Now I will glance at the answer which the believers in endless misery give to the above-named reasoning. They concede that Jesus must be understood as speaking of temporal judgments, in this portion of Scripture, from the beginning of the twenty-fourth chapter, to the thirty-first verse of the twenty-fifth chapter. But, there it is asserted he introduces a new topic, — about which the disciples had made no inquiries — the general judgment of the human race, beyond the ages of time, in the eternal world. "But in reply I would ask, what evidence is there that the Son of God, without the slightest intimation, *here* suddenly and abruptly passes from speaking of things that were to happen in his day, to a consideration of occurrences which are yet future, and will not take place till time shall be no more? Not a particle of evidence in support of the supposition can be elicited from a fair interpretation of Scripture, found in this or any

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other part of the Bible. Can a transition similar to the one above imagined be pointed out in the whole compass of the Gospel? If our Saviour was in the habit, without the slightest notice, of making such leaps in his discourses, what reliance can be placed upon his teachings? In this case they would be too vague, rambling and undetermined, to settle any important question of morals, or theolggy. But we have the strongest proof that the subject of our Saviour's discourse is not changed at the commencement of the thirty-first verse. For it begins thus: "*When* the Son of Man shall come in his glory." This naturally and irresistibly suggests the question, When was he to come "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory?" He has already told us. The time of the judgment described in the parable of the sheep and goats, is fixed by Christ himself. "Verily I say unto you this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." (Williamson.)

This view of the subject is strongly corroborated by what are called parallel passages. Take for instance the twenty-seventh verse in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew. "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and *then* he shall reward every man according to his works." There can be no doubt that the coming of Christ with his angels, to reward every man according to his works, here spoken, refers to a temporal judgment only. Because in the twenty-eighth verse of the same chapter Jesus says, "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." Take another parallel passage, the whole of the twenty-first chapter of Luke. All admit that in this chapter nothing is spoken of but the overthrow of Jerusalem, of the Jewish nation and the Mosaic economy; yet the

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language is as bold, sublime, figurative, and as easily applicable to a general judgment beyond the scenes of earth and time, as that made use of in the parable at the close of the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. Besides, in the parable of the sheep and the goats, the condemned are represented as doomed to punishment for one *species of sin only* — the wilful rejection of our Saviour. Those who receive Jesus are saved — enter into life — those who do not receive him, are condemned and punished. Of course this cannot be a description of the general judgment at the end of the world, when the destinies of the whole human race are to be fixed for all eternity. For but a very small part of the innumerable millions, who have died, or are now living, ever heard of Jesus Christ, or had proffered to them the blessings of everlasting life in his name. They cannot therefore have incurred the guilt of rejecting him. They cannot have any part in this judgment. Therefore it must be a partial, local, limited, temporal, and particular dispensation of justice — not general. The description of sinners represented as judged in the parable before us, corresponds precisely with the well-known character of the inhabitants of Palestine in the time of Jesus. And they are the only persons alluded to in the discourse of our Lord, recorded in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew.

These arguments conclusively prove that the words "to be sent into everlasting life," do not mean to be doomed to endless misery beyond the grave. "Let the man who contends for the future application of this text, take heed that he be not found joining hands with infidels; by being unwilling to accept the word of Christ, and to believe that he did come as he said he would, before that generation passed away. We affirm that he came as he said, and appeal to his word, and to authentic

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history for the proof. And yet we are denounced, and those who falsify the words of Christ, and make him a false prophet, are regarded as his true disciples. To such lengths does the blind zeal of infatuated bigotry run." (I. D. Williamson, D. D.)

It is certain then, that the judgment spoken of in the parable of the sheep and goats, was to have its fulfilment in the generation in which our Saviour lived. We now inquire, who were they that were to go into "*everlasting fire?*" "Keeping close to the Scriptures, there is not the least imaginable difficulty in finding the true answer to this question. They were the unbelieving Jews — the persecutors of our Saviour — the same people over whom, but one short hour before, he had wept, saying, 'Oh! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that stonest,' &c. 'Behold your house is left unto you desolate,' &c. Accordingly the event corresponded with the prediction. A few years passed away, and Jerusalem was as the Saviour said it should be — encompassed with armies. There the nations were assembled: *there* and *then* the great city fell; the Jewish age or dispensation (called world in our translation) came to an end; the power of Israel was humbled; her sons and daughters were driven into exile, enslaved, and destroyed. Hitherto they had been exalted at God's right hand, but now they were banished from Palestine, and sent away into a long-enduring, bitter punishment, where they and their children have been from that day to the present — eighteen hundred years."

But it is alleged that the phrase "*everlasting fire,*" fairly interpreted, must mean endless punishment. Let us see. There is a science called Biblical Criticism. It consists of a set of laws, which Divines and Theologians of every school have agreed to follow in explaining and interpreting the Bible. Two of these rules bear immediately upon the

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point before us. First, the peculiar idioms and metaphors of the New Testament were derived from the Hebrew Sciptures. Secondly, when the same metaphors and figures are found in both Testaments, we must give to them both the same meaning, unless evidence can be adduced that their ancient import was changed by Christ or his apostles. The basis of this rule is the fact that in our Saviour's time there was no Bible — no standard of faith and practice in use, but the Hebrew Old Testament. Therefore, we must suppose that he employed figurative words, in the sense which they bore in the Sacred Writings of the Jews, or his discourses would have been calculated to mislead and deceive his hearers. Now the language "everlasting fire," is of common occurrence in the Old Testament, and in every instance it is used to denote some temporal evil — some calamity belonging to this world — which can exist and be endured this side the grave only. Look into the thirty-fourth chapter of Isaiah. It contains a prediction of the overthrow of the ancient city and land of Idumea, and the phrase "everlasting fire" is there used to signify national desolation — of course a limited, temporal evil.

A merely English reader of the Bible is led astray by the adjective "everlasting" affixed to so many nouns in Scripture. The word in the original Greek is *aionios*. The Rev. Mr. Goodwin, a learned Unitarian clergyman of Boston, having access to all the libraries in that vicinity, and the most erudite scholars to help him, examined the usages as to *aionios* in all the classical Greek, prior to the time of our Saviour, stretching through a space of one thousand years. As the result of his investigations in regard to this word, which were published in the "Christian Examiner" about the year 1830, Mr. Goodwin says, that in all the Greek profane classics, it "never expressed positive eter-

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nity," neither in the form of a substantive nor adjective. His statements have never been refuted. The Unitarians of New England have in our day done more to elucidate and establish the correct import of Scripture than all the Trinitarian divines and scholars that have lived since the Reformation, either in Europe or the United States. All honor be to these noble and intrepid men, who with a moral greatness, surpassed only by that of their Divine Master, have dared to find out and proclaim Scriptural truth, in defiance of the anathemas, scorn, and disparagement poured out upon them by the united sects of Christendom. They have passed through an ordeal, almost, perhaps, quite as severe as that endured by the martyrs of the primitive ages. Posterity will appreciate, and do justice to the labors of these true-hearted, self-sacrificing men. Their memories will be preserved, grow, and flourish through unknown ages, among the children of those who now hate and denounce them. Calmly and honestly to pursue the investigation of religious truth, to avow partiality and attachment for it when in disgrace and unpopularity, to bear contempt and ridicule for the cause of Jesus, and suffer for it with unflinching constancy—these require that elevation, that magnanimous independence of thought, that superiority to all personal, selfish considerations which belong only to a mind that has been cast in the divine, noble mould of Evangelical piety. I thank God, that by his providence, I was brought acquainted with the Unitarian writings of New England, when stationed in New Orleans, and compelled, all alone, to struggle against a thousand opposing influences and discouragements.

In the days of Christ, when the Jews desired to express the idea of endless duration, they used words widely different from those which our Saviour applied to punishment, and which have been ren-

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dered *forever* and *eternal* in our English Bible. The two most distinguished Hebrew authors of that age were Josephus and Philo. The former, when speaking of endless punishment, always uses the terms *aidios* or *adialeiptos*, or some other word which, in classical Greek, signifies a positive absolute eternity. But, in speaking of things limited in their duration, he invariably employs *aionios*, or some other word of a similar import. Thus he speaks of the *aionios* name of the Hebrew Patriarchs—the *aionios* glory of the Jewish nation and heroes; the *aionios* reputation of Herod; the *aionios* monument which he erected; an *aionios* fire that was already extinguished; and *aionios* imprisonment to which John the Tyrant was condemned, &c.

In all these cases a child can see that *aionios* expresses a limited or indefinite space of time, showing the indubitable fact that such was its usual signification in the days of our Saviour, and that he never gave the least countenance to the doctrine of endless punishment by calling it *aionios*. Philo was an avowed believer in punishment without an end, and he expresses this endlessness by using the words *athanatos*, *ateleutetos*, &c. At the same time he was in the habit of using *aionios* to signify limited duration. Speaking of the hurt which an offended neighbor might do to us, he demonstrates that injury, which can be but temporal, an *aionios kolasis*, the identical phrase in the parable of the sheep and the goats, translated *everlasting punishment*. In the "Sibyline Oracles," which were certainly extant in the second century, the doctrine of universal salvation was distinctly taught; yet they inculcated a belief in an *aionios* punishment, implying the term, of course, to designate a duration which can be measured. Clemens, Alexandrinus, Origen, and other celebrated fathers, who were well known and open defenders of the ultimate salvation

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of all mankind, at the same time avow their full belief in *aionios* punishment—that is limited discipline—but they deny the *aidios* or *athanatos*—that is, endless punishment. Now, these men, living so near the time of Jesus, must have used *aionios* in the same sense which it really bears throughout the New Testament. In the oldest Greek lexicon of either the fourth or sixth century, that of Hesychius, Mr. Goodwin says that the definition of *aion* makes no allusion whatever to any sense of eternity in this word. (The facts above stated are taken from "Austin and Holmes' Debate on Universalism," a very valuable work.)

There is a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, which was made by Jewish scholars, about two thousand years ago. They, of course, understood their own Scriptures. It is admitted by all Biblical critics that in this version, called the Septuagint, the signification of *aionios* is indefinite. It may mean an hour, a day, a month, a year, a century, or a cycle. The actual duration which it expresses can never be determined by the mere force of the word itself, but must be derived from the connection, or from the nature of the subject, or some other argument besides its mere dictionary import. As in the phrases "a great book," "a great mountain," the nature of the case shows that *great* in the former instance has a different meaning from what it bears in the latter. The most extended sense of *aionios* is "age-lasting, or long-enduring." In this sense it is applied to God and heaven — the long-enduring Jehovah, the long-enduring bliss of saints and angels. One may say, if he choose, that in these instances it signifies unlimited duration. What then? The argument for the endless duration of God is not, in this case, founded on the force of *aionios*, but on the nature of the subject to which it is applied, as in the

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example just referred to—a *great book*, a *great mountain*. God will exist forever, we believe, not because *aionios* is applied to him, but because he is infinite and boundless in his nature. "There is no educated clergyman of the Calvinistic school who would risk his reputation as a scholar by attempting to deny these views of *aionios*. Yet, after admitting them he will stand up in his pulpit and quote the words, These shall go away into everlasting punishment, as conclusive proof that those who die impenitent will suffer an eternal condemnation. The word in the original here rendered *everlasting*, is *aionios*, and the word rendered punishment, is *kolasis*. This minister knows that in Greek literature, the whole phrase is indefinite, and cannot, therefore, by any fair and logical process, be adduced to prove endless punishment. I will not descend by applying to such a course of conduct appropriate epithets."

In strictness there is no more proof of post mortem or future punishment, in the twenty-fifth of Matthew than there is in the first chapter of Genesis. Some divines make doleful lamentations about being robbed of *aionios*, the strongest term in Greek to prove the eternity of God and Heaven. But, their fears and complaints are without the slightest foundation. Nobody relies upon this adjective to demonstrate the endless duration of God, virtue, and happiness. The ministers who wish to make out that evil will run on, spreading its ravages wider and wider, long as the throne of the Creator shall last, have the whole Greek literature at their service—a literature singularly rich and copious, most beautiful and expressive. It abounds with such words as *aidios*, *athanatos*, *ateleutetos*, *adialeiptos*, *apthartos*, and the like, which literally and appropriately signify endlessness. These are employed in Scripture to express the eternity of the Creator

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and his blessed kingdom, but are never applied in a single instance that I can find, to the punishment of wicked men. Though, perhaps, some of these terms may be employed figuratively, to denote a long duration, which is not absolutely endless, I cannot cite an instance of this kind. It is a melancholy thought that any clergyman can be sorry that these terms cannot be legitimately employed to prove the infinite wrath of God, and that this wrath will be exercised in dooming countless millions of his own children to unending, remediless perdition. Is there a minister living who can rejoice in the belief that a large portion of his fellow-beings, and among them, perhaps, his own wife, children, and friends, will be finally and forever lost? If there is, such a person cannot be like God in this particular, for the Bible assures us that God has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked." It seems to give pain to some people to hear the tenet of a final restoration of all mankind adverted to. They cling to the comforting doctrine of endless perdition; and would, I suppose, if robbed of it, exclaim with Micah of old, "Ye have taken away my gods which I have made, and what have I more?" How transporting and god-like the opposite faith, that in the mighty roll of future ages, the time is coming when the last wandering prodigal will be brought back to his Father's house, amid the rejoicings and hallelujahs of the whole intelligent creation!

It is said that the fire prepared for the *devil and his angels* can exist in an eternal state only. But, if this language be understood literally, we must believe in a material hell—a doctrine which the clergy at this day of every denomination have repudiated. The truth is, these words, "The devil and his angels," designate the persons of our Saviour's age who were his enemies and persecutors. Jesus himself calls one of his own disciples a *devil* or *satan*; that

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is, an opposer, an adversary to certain views of truth which he was inculcating. According to the same sense, men and women are often styled *devils* in different parts of the New Testament. The term *fire* here is used figuratively to denote the calamities inflicted upon these opponents, or devils, at the time of the destruction of their city, temple, and nation. All orthodox and Trinitarian critics of the highest reputation and learning agree that fire is symbolical of temporal judgments inflicted upon the wicked, in many parts of the Bible.

To set this subject in a proper light, I will now record a prediction concerning the United States, couched in the prophetical style used by our Saviour, in common with the sacred writers of the Jewish nation, who were before him.

"In the year 1900, our republic will be destroyed by invading armies. Then the Son of man will appear in the clouds of heaven, with his holy angels in great power and glory. And being seated upon his throne of judgment, before him shall be assembled all the people of the United States — and they shall be judged every one according to their works. They who submit to his authority will be admitted to everlasting life; they who reject him will be sent away into everlasting punishment. Then, also, the sun shall be blotted out, and the moon shall cease to shine, and the stars of heaven shall fall like seared leaves, in the time of autumn. Our mighty rivers, the Connecticut, Hudson, Ohio, Mississippi, &c., will be turned into streams of glowing brimstone. Our mountains, plains, hills and valleys, shall become burning pitch, and send up perpetually thick volumes of smoke, darkening the whole heavens. And this fire shall burn forever. It will be unquenchable. No man shall pass through these sulphurous regions again forever and ever."

Now, the above is a fair sample of the Oriental

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imagery, by which the Hebrew writers and prophets foretold the *temporal* destruction of nations, and all the evils which follow and overwhelm the inhabitants of captured and demolished cities and empires. Bishop Lowth in his lectures on the Hebrew Bible, (an eminent Trinitarian belonging to the Church of England,) remarks, that although this kind of imagery seems to us so strange and extravagant, it was perfectly familiar and intelligible to the Jews in olden times; and that they invariably understood it in the sense above expressed as relating to temporal calamities only. If any reader have doubts as to the accuracy of this representation, let him read and prepend attentively the twenty-first chapter according to the Gospel of St. Luke. It is admitted by Newton, in his work on the prophecies, and all the most distinguished Calvinistic expounders, that there is not a verse or image in this whole chapter which does not relate to the destruction of the Jewish temple, city and nation. But it is precisely the same style, type of imagery, figures and thoughts, also, which characterize the twenty-fifth of Matthew, and other parallel passages.

There is scarcely a theologian of any name, acquainted with the Hebrew and Greek languages, who does not grant that the descriptions in the twenty-first of Luke embrace temporal events only. Indeed, the supposition that these words of our Lord, have especial reference to transactions in the eternal world, is confined almost exclusively to those ministers and laymen who read the Bible in no other language but the English. I wish there was more space for authorities. It is certain, to my mind, that the doctrine of future, endless woe is founded on popular ignorance of the true import of God's word. As soon as the general spread of sound biblical knowledge shall have chased away this ignorance from the religious horizon, the doctrine will

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exist no longer, except in the dark histories of other times.

But, it is alleged that the Son of God, in several places speaks of the "fire" of *hell*, and asserts positively that it shall never be extinguished. "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9: 46.) Hell! In what part of the original Bible is this word to be found? I answer it does not occur once in the whole volume. I mean, of course, the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures rightly understood; and understanding by the term "hell" a place where the wicked will be punished forever after death. The idea of eternal punishment is not advocated by any form of phraseology in the whole compass of revelation. Where, then, did the word and its belongings originate? Thank Heaven! it does not in a single instance soil the pure, unadulterated truth of inspiration. Walk along the streets, wharves and thoroughfares of our large cities and towns, and we shall hear it falling from the lips of the low, vulgar, profane and abandoned, as if it were one of their most familiar, household, cherished words. It was first used by dark and wicked Pagans, thousands of years before the coming of Christ. Its origin is absolute pollution. It breathes only of pollution. Its appropriate home is the veriest slough of vice, ignorance and infamy. Sad spectacle, indeed, to see a Christian minister in the pulpit, trying to elevate and sanctify this vile word, as if it descended from the regions of celestial sweetness, peace and purity! But it is all in vain. No efforts, however learned or ingenious, can make it expressive of divine, harmonious, beautiful truth, any more than they could transform the Satan of popular faith into an angel of light and loveliness. I grant that the term hell is found in the English Scriptures. But it has no lawful right there. It has been thrust upon the sacred pages by usurped, unfounded author-

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ity — the authority of uninspired men. Sixty-four times this word is used in our Bible, and in every instance conveys falsehood and blasphemy to those who understand only English literature. The corresponding terms in the original are never employed to signify punishment after death.

Dr. Lightfoot (orthodox) says, "the Old Testament must be consulted in order to find out the peculiar meaning of our Saviour's words, idioms, phrases and figures." Turning over this dictionary we see that the terms "fire of hell, or hell fire, unquenchable fire, the worm that never dies, everlasting fire, Gehenna or hell, (so rendered by our translators,) tophet, &c.," are all figuratively descriptive of calamities inflicted upon individuals and nations in time — this side the grave. Thus in Isaiah 34th chapter: and Jeremiah 17: 27, the temporal overthrow of Idumea and Jerusalem are foretold by saying that they shall be burnt with unquenchable, everlasting fire, (the severest fire,) whose smoke shall go up forever and ever. Dr. Graves, Horne, Bishop Warburton, of the Church of England, Dr. Jahn of the Roman Catholic Church, Palfrey, in his learned work on the Hebrew Scriptures, and every other biblical critic of eminence in our day assert that there are no rewards nor punishments mentioned, or even alluded to, in the Old Testament, except those of the present life. Hence. it is clear that Jesus did not use the words "everlasting fire" to mean eternal suffering, because when speaking to the Jews, he must have addressed them in the style of their own Scriptures. And the Son of God assures them that their Scriptures contained every motive that could be presented to their minds, in order to induce them to pursue a right course of conduct, and secure their salvation. He tells them that if "they would not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose

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from the dead." Yet, it is conceded by all, that neither Moses nor the prophets utter a syllable concerning interminable punishment after death. But if the Jews had been actually exposed to such a fearful doom, would they not have been told so most explicitly, in a divine revelation which solemnly professed to enumerate all the dangers and penalties of a sinful life? If such an awful doctrine was not needed then to keep man from evil ways, can it be wanted in this more improved and enlightened age of the world? A child can see the decisive bearing of this question.

It is asked what is the true interpretation of the words "eternal life," into the enjoyment of which those on the right hand entered? I answer in the language of the unerring Master, "This is *eternal life* to know thee, the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Life eternal is gospel life, consisting in the knowledge of God and his Son. Into this life the Gentiles entered, when the Jews were cast out, and the messengers of Jesus turned to them to preach the words of eternal truth. In various passages of the New Testament those who believe in the gospel are said to be in the enjoyment of eternal life here, before they die. That the phrase often bears this import is not denied. To enter into eternal life, often means to be introduced to the perception and love of divine truth in the present world. The phrase is not employed in these instances to signify immortal blessedness in a future state, but the happiness which a sincere believer possesses this side the grave. Neither does the antithetic phrase "everlasting punishment" mean an endless suffering beyond time, but those temporal calamities to which the transgressors referred to in the parable, were to be subjected in the present world. Many eminent commentators of the Trinitarian school, have thus

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explained these words. We see, then, how utterly futile is the popular reasoning that as "everlasting" when applied to the fate of those on the right hand signifies eternal bliss in heaven, it is an unavoidable conclusion, that in its application to the antagonistic class, it expresses a directly the opposite destiny — eternal suffering. For neither the reward nor punishment spoken of here is expressive of the conditions of any body in the spiritual, ever enduring world to come. This is affirmed by the Son of God himself, for he declares that this parable should be fulfilled before the death of some persons who were then living.

But, even conceding that the word in one instance meant eternal happiness, it would not follow that in the other it denoted eternal misery; for throughout Scripture, in the same verse, the same adjective is often employed in totally different senses, as in the text. "Let the dead bury their dead." In Romans 16: 25, 26, "everlasting in one clause signifies a limited duration, in another it is expressive of an endless existence. So that in either case, the text in Matthew twenty-fifth does not conclusively prove the point in debate. It has been thought by some that the clause, "And before him shall be gathered all nations," demonstrates that a general judgment of the entire human race is described in the parable of the sheep and the goats. But in the original the phrase "all nations" simply means all the inhabitants of Palestine; as in the thirtieth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, "all the tribes of the earth or globe," signifies, by universal concession, all the people of Judea only.

Now, there are several classes of texts so altered throughout the New Testament, which make it absolutely certain that our Saviour did not introduce the parable of the sheep and the goats to teach the doctrine of eternal woe. Though referred to in

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the preceding pages, I must here repeat them. The first is composed of those in which Jesus affirms that he was raised up, and sent forth by the Father to redeem entire humanity — "to make a propitiation for the sins of the whole world; to taste death for every man." Will he not accomplish, ultimately, the enterprise that he has undertaken? The celebrated John Calvin, who was one of the closest reasoners that have figured in the theological world of the last three centuries, somewhere remarks, "That if Jesus died for the redemption of all mankind, then it follows, by necessity, that all mankind will sometime or other be redeemed; for not one drop of the Saviour's blood has been shed in vain. He did not interpose for a purpose which some contingency might frustrate. He has all the resources requisite to carry into complete execution the sublime scheme of redeeming mercy." Hence, this great man taught that there is no Saviour for the non-elect. No matter how good or noble their lives may be, they cannot escape that destruction for which they were ordained by the immutable, eternal decree of reprobation. In my poor judgment, this is the only logical ground on which the doctrine of endless woe can be maintained. For, if Jesus came to save all men, it is self-evident that he will never send any portion of them to everlasting ruin.

There is a second class of texts in which Christ declares that the Father has given all men — *literally all* — into his hands; that all who have been given to him will come unto him, and that no one of those who come unto him can be lost. A third class of texts affirms that the number of the finally saved will be exactly equal to the number of the human race. As many as are lost through Adam will be redeemed by Christ. In the fifth chapter of Romans we are taught that it is the unchangeable, eternal purpose of the Father to deliver the entire race of

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man from mortality, sin and suffering. A fourth class of texts teaches that all mankiud, without exception, good and bad, just and unjust, will be raised from the dead, — will survive the dissolution of the body, or be immortalized. We are not only told that all mankind will live forever, but also that they will one day become as the angels of God in heaven; die no more; sin no more; and suffer no more. A fifth class commands us to pray for the salvation of all mankind; "Because this is good and acceptable to God our Saviour, who will have all men to come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved." It seems like blasphemy to suppose that God would require us to pray for a consummation which was not in accordance with his will; and equally so to imagine that what he really desires will never take place. A sixth class of texts asserts that after Jesus shall have subdued all our enemies; after he shall have destroyed death, *the last enemy*, and converted every sinner, he will resign his mediatorial commission into the hands of his Father, and become subject himself also to the one undivided, and indivisible Jehovah, that God may be ALL IN ALL. Is it possible to devise language more precise, beautiful, or magnificent, to express the doctrine of the ultimate exaltation of entire humanity to the glories of an heavenly state?

There is not one of the above-named classes of texts which does not demonstrate the great fundamental error of supposing that the parable of the sheep and the goats, or any other parable, or figures of speech uttered by our Lord, were intended to teach the final condemnation of any part of the human race. For, if any go away at last into everlasting punishment, then it cannot be true that "all men will come unto Christ;" "that none of those who come unto him will be cast out;" "that the number of the finally saved will include Adam and all

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his posterity;" "that in the resurrection state to which all men will be raised, there will be no more death, sin, nor suffering;" "that the *last enemy*, death, shall be destroyed;" "that the Father really desires the reformation and everlasting happiness of all his erring, fallen children," &c. If the doctrine of endless misery be taught in Scripture, all these glorious assertions are downright, palpable falsehoods and blasphemies. In this case, we must concede that the New Testament is what its enemies represent it to be—not only the invention of uninspired men, but an invention full of puerilities, contradictions, and things impossible to be received as the word of God. Let it be remembered that the Scriptures teach the final restoration of all mankind in language so explicit that it cannot be misunderstood. The sublime sentiment is expressed in terms so plain, simple, literal, obvious, direct, and varied, that no art, no ingenuity of learned expounders can reconcile them with the doctrine of eternal punishment. But, the opposite texts adduced in support of the popular idea of hell, as all agree, may be so explained, without violating a single law of grammar and sound interpretation, as not to conflict with the class of passages which affirm that all mankind will become, eventually, holy and happy; or, in other words, upon the principles of liberal Christianity, the teachings of Jesus and his apostles in regard to the future destination of man, are uniform and harmonious, but upon the Calvinistic platform, they are hopelessly inconsistent, contradictory, and subversive of all just claims upon our reception as true and divine. Concede the correctness of those interpretations of Scripture upon which the advocates of endless misery insist, and the Bible, as a necessary consequence, must cease to be regarded as an inspired volume, containing the words of God and eternal life. It must be surrendered into the hands of the Deist.

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CHAPTER IX.

PARABLE OF DIVES AND LAZARUS.

It is said that in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, our Saviour, in the most unambiguous terms, speaks of a rich man, who had departed this life, and "was lifting up his eyes in hell, being in torments." Pray, what does this language mean? This question opens a vast field of discussion, which might well occupy a volume. But, I shall confine my present remarks to a single object—the faithful exhibition of those views concerning Dives and Lazarus, which have been held by learned orthodox, Trinitarian believers in endless misery, for the last nine hundred years.

And first allow me to introduce to your acquaintance, that great and good divine — Theopylact, who lived in the tenth century, and was one of the brightest luminaries in the theological horizon of that age. All the clergy of Christendom acknowledge his superior abilities, and integrity. He was by birth a Grecian, and most thoroughly acquainted with his vernacular tongue. He left behind him a commentary on the New Testament, composed in his native language. It is held in the highest estimation by the biblical scholars of the present day. Dr. Lardner says, "that his work is one of the most reliable, which the olden times have bestowed upon us. Its value is enhanced by the fact

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that he is a very cautious, and discriminating author. He never quotes spurious books, or forgeries — such as the Apocryphal Gospels, &c. Besides, he has given us nearly all that is extant, belonging to the commentaries of Origen, Chrysostom, and other Fathers of the earlier ages." Indeed we learn from this venerable man what were the prevailing opinions in the Church, on the most prominent points of doctrine, from the apostolic days up to the time in which he lived.

Now what view does Theophylact take of Dives and Lazarus. He affirms that this portion of Scripture contains not one particle of real, absolute, historic truth. Observe that, for the sake of brevity, I use my own words, but they convey an accurate statement of his thoughts and arguments. He declares in the most explicit terms that the entire narrative is a fancy sketch. It is a fiction — a story feigned, invented, imagined, in order to convey to his hearers an important and interesting moral. Allow me to be particular on this point. Theophylact teaches that we must not suppose that Dives actually lived; carried a body with him into the eternal world, in which he was tormented for the sins committed previous to his death; nor that Lazarus was once a beggar on earth, who, on awaking in the land of spirits, found himself reclining on Abraham's bosom; nor that such a dialogue was literally held between the patriarch and the rich man, &c. In other words, all the facts here stated are imaginary, and are put forth to impress certain instructions which will presently be noticed. To this point too much importance cannot be attached, that according to the distinguished divine just named, the narrative about Dives and Lazarus is a mere romance, — as truly so as the Vicar of Wakefield, Robinson Crusoe, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, or the incidents in Milton's Paradise Lost. The argu-

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ments upon which this ancient theologian rests an interpretation, which to many may seem visionary and unwarranted, are distinctly specified. The sum of his reasonings is based upon the following laws of exegesis. Whenever a text or portion of Scripture literally understood, implies or asserts what is in the nature of things absurd, impossible or wicked, then we must give to it a figurative import. For instance, when we read that "God has a body precisely resembling that of man: that he wields the weapons of a warrior — sword, bow and arrows — with which he puts his enemies to death; that he keeps a sumptuous table, rides in a chariot, is sometimes angry and jealous, and even sorry for what he has done," we receive such declarations as metaphorical, because literally explained, they ascribe the grossest imperfections to our Creator. The Bible says, that as a servant in the kitchen washes a dish clean, wiping it, and turning it upside and down, even so will God do with the city of Jerusalem. Literally this is low, vulgar and disagreeable. In the shape of a figure it exhibits refined, beautiful and exalted truth. (See Bishop Lowth's Lectures). In the future world there are no bodies, and consequently no one there is capable of being tormented with fire. Nor are the remaining facts asserted in the description, literally understood, within the limits of possibility.

Let us remember that according to the report of the four evangelists, our Saviour uttered many fictions or parables. It was with him a favorite mode of inculcating divine truth. It is universally admitted, that so far as their narrative parts are concerned, the gospel parables are entirely allegorical, with the exception (as some allege) of Dives and Lazarus. No one supposes that in the parables of the sower, the good Samaritan, the tares and the wheat, &c., that the persons and scenes there intro-

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duced, were really matters of fact. Why then, should not the parable we are considering, fall within the sweep of the general law?

The parables of our Saviour present sublime and important spiritualities in a simple, definite, and intelligible shape. By their help he was able, as it were, to draw aside the veil which hides the future state, and impart to its vast, ethereal and magnificent scenes the substance, coloring and sensible qualities of the material objects around us. Allegories exhibit the truth on which they are employed in a picturesque form — bring the most abstract conceptions within the reach of the obtuse, ignorant and unreflecting. They surround a doctrine with adventitious circumstances of a tangible character, by, which the dullest, weakest minds can lay hold of and contemplate it steadily, without confusion or embarrassment. I do not see how Christianity could have been taught to the mass of mankind without their instrumentality. The story of the good Samaritan is a more impressive exhibition of the duties of benevolence, than all which the eloquence of uninspired man has ever uttered on this theme. As we can never forget the sensible picture or image, neither can we become insensible to those charming principles which it inculcates. Jesus deceived no one, for the fictitious part of his discourses was understood by his hearers, and were in harmony with the taste and literature of that day, and that part of the world. How simple, beautiful, and fascinating would the pulpit now be if its teachings were in the style which characterized the discourses of Christ?

From the time of Theophylact, (who asserts that his exegesis had been the prevailing one since the days of Origen,) down to the middle of the seventeenth century, there seems to have been no dispute about the parabolic aspect of Dives and Lazarus.

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But the Puritans of England had revived the idea, perhaps, as long ago as John Bunyan's time, that this portion of the Bible should be regarded in the light of a real history. It was a leading object with them to make the popular views of a future state as terrific as possible. Strange men! They threw a funeral pall over all that is naturally bright and beautiful in this world, and endeavored to shroud our prospects beyond the grave in the thick darkness of eternal night. Their reasonings were successfully resisted by the celebrated Lightfoot, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, England, and one of the profoundest biblical scholars belonging to modern times. Though a firm believer in endless punishment, he took the same ground with Theophylact, and for the same reasons. Indeed, he fairly ridicules the credulity of his puritanical opponents. He says, "That the persons who received Dives and Lazarus as real history, can believe also those little friars, whose trade it is to show the curiosities of Jerusalem to travellers, and who profess to point out exactly the place where the house of Dives stood. Most accurate keepers of antiquity! truly, who after hundreds of years, amid the changes, overthrows and devastations of Jerusalem, can rake out of the rubbish of by-gone ages and scenes, the site of a dwelling that never had an existence, except in the regions of imagination." He then declares that not only the consent of all the ablest expositors, but also the nature of the description itself, assures us that it is a parable.

Whitby, a Trinitarian, and a believer in eternal woe, who lived about a hundred and thirty years ago, uses the following words: "That this account of Dives and Lazarus is only an allegory, and not a real history of what was actually done, is evident." He enumerates these evidences, which are substantially the same with those just mentioned. Also, it

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is said by Whitby, that Jesus did not invent this parable, but took it from the Jewish legends, which were familiar to the minds of his hearers. It is found in the Gemara, a work belonging to the ancient literature of the Hebrew nation. Lightfoot argues, with great force, the utter impossibility of explaining many of the circumstances here mentioned — (such, for instance, as the supposition that human bodies, fire, water, and other material elements exist and act in the spiritual world,) without considering them as figurative or parabolic in their character. But, it will not do to take the ground that one part is parable, and that the rest must be accounted as real history. The whole narrative is either entirely allegorical or entirely literal. But, on the ground that it is literal throughout, it becomes absolutely absurd and inexplicable. This plan of interpretation, therefore, must be abandoned.

The Rev. Mr. Nathan, for some time settled over the Jewish synagogue, Canal street, New Orleans, an accomplished Hebrew scholar — told me that he had read this story in the Gemara, and that, in his judgment, it had no reference to the actual condition of disembodied spirits in the future world. To mention all the authorities bearing on this point, is not now possible, for want of space. I must not omit, however, the names of the two most celebrated critics, as to biblical literature, in the United States, the late Professor Stuart, of Andover, Mass., and the Rev. Dr. Barnes, a Presbyterian clergyman, of Philadelphia. The eminent genius and vast learning of these gentlemen are universally acknowledged. We may judge of their integrity from the fact that, although subscribing to the doctrine of endless punishment, yet they adopt, in the main, the same principles of interpretation as to this parable, with Theophylact and others of the olden times. I doubt not that at least nine in ten of the most competent

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judges, for the last one thousand years, have repudiated the idea that Dives and Lazarus should be considered in the light of historical, authentic facts.

But in reply, it is urged that nothing can be more explicit than the words of Christ, for he positively asserts, "That the rich man died, and after that lifted up his eyes in *hell*, being in torments." A distinguished author has remarked that this text is the spiritual sling and stone with which any untaught, evangelical stripling in the ministry can easily prostrate the Goliaths of heresy, in defiance of their utmost ingenuity and resources of sacred lore. But there is a radical defect in this sling. It is powerful, only in the imagination of the ignorant. For all the critics, without an exception, above named, deny that Jesus says that the rich man was in *hell*—meaning "hell in the common acceptation of the term, as it is now used throughout the Christian world,"

> "A little learning is a dangerous thing!
> Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring;"

The Greek term here rendered hell is Hades. This, they all affirm, never signifies hell in any author, sacred or profane. Dr. George Campbell, of Scotland, a Presbyterian divine, and an avowed believer in the endlessness of future punishment, declares, "That *Hades* ought never in Scripture to be rendered hell, supposing hell to signify a place of punishment after death." The rich man and the beggar, and Abraham, are all represented as being together in the same place. It is not intended that one was in hell, and the other two in heaven, but that they were all neighbors, enjoying each other's company, inhabitants of the same world. Professor Stuart says, "That the literal *hades* receives all mortal men when they die, without distinction of character. All the good who have died are now, according to the Bible, in

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hades, but not in hell, of course." Besides, Scripture teaches that all men will be raised from *hades* to an incorruptible and immortal inheritance. The time is coming when *hades* will be emptied; when not one soul will be found residing there. It cannot, therefore, be what they designate by the word Gehenna, — the place usually denominated *hell*, for the tenants of that prison-house, it is held, will never be set free. Or, in other words, Scripture affirms unequivocally, that *hades* will come to an end, will be shut up finally and forever. It follows, therefore, by a necessary consequence, that Jesus did not say that the rich man was in *hell*, meaning by the word a place of everlasting punishment.

This, then, is the sum of what has been advanced by orthodox clergymen, and divines, and critics — to prove that Dives and Lazarus is a parable. Parables, as all know, are a species of figurative language. According to their concession, therefore, the facts here mentioned are not to be understood as realities, but as the symbols or similitudes only of spiritual things. Literally explained, the parable involves what is absurd and impossible. If *hades* is a place of punishment, Jesus should have told us so plainly, unequivocally and repeatedly. This he has never done, even by allusion, implication, or figure of speech. If the apostles had understood their Master as teaching that *hades* was a place of torment, they would have preached the doctrine continually and everywhere. This they never did in a single instance. Professor Stuart says that the Hebrew word corresponding to the Greek *hades*, never signifies hell or a place of future punishment, in the Old Testament; nor is the idea of such a place so much as hinted at, even, in the sacred books of the Jewish nation.

But, our Saviour tells us virtually that these books give us all the information which it is necessary to

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have in regard to our future destiny. Who can assert that it was morally right for Moses and Jesus to say nothing about punishment after death, if, in fact, we are exposed to a doom so awful? The suppression of this truth, under these circumstances, would be enough to prevent our having the slightest confidence in either their character or teachings. Indeed, a supposition of this kind fills the reflecting mind with horror, for it is tantamount to saying that the Son of God saw us plunging down to eternal ruin, and gave us no warning of our danger, nor lifted a finger for our salvation therefrom. These considerations are perfectly decisive. It is not necessary to add another syllable to show that Jesus never actually spoke of a rich man's being tormented after death.

What, then, is the real meaning of the parable? It is said that no one at this day believes in a material hell — that the fire mentioned in Dives and Lazarus is not to be understood as literal fire. It is simply an emblem. What then? Are the pains which it indicates less real or less terrible on that account. Ah! me, what are the severest sufferings which material agents can inflict, compared with those torments of which to dwell in eternal burnings is but an emblem, a symbol, or exponent? The truth is, mental sufferings are infinitely more to be dreaded than those which are corporeal, however aggravated.

I return to the question Can any mortal tell what this parable teaches? I will present the general features of its interpretation as laid down by Theophylact, and all critics of the same school. He says that by the rich man is signified the Jewish nation, and he refers to numerous passages in the Old Testament, where the Jews are spoken of under this figure. Lazarus means the poor Gentiles, — poor spiritually, because excluded from the advan-

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tages which God's covenant people enjoyed. The Jewish nation was destroyed by the Romans, died, and was buried. The poor man died to sin and darkness, (glorious death!) and went to the kingdom of light, truth, and hope — or was introduced into the church of Christ, — which fact is expressed by saying that after this metaphorical death, he was permitted to *repose in* the bosom of Abraham. Throughout Scripture the moral declension of individuals and nations is described figuratively, by speaking of them as dead and buried. On the contrary, their reform and exaltation are represented by saying that they have been raised from *hades* to the enjoyment of another and better life. (See Ezekiel, 37th chapter, Romans 6: 11, &c.) So that hades, (falsely rendered hell in this parable) signifies the moral condition of certain parts of mankind this side the grave, and contains not so much as an allusion to the unseen, disembodied state of the soul in future existence. The fire which tormented the rich man, symbolizes the temporal sufferings that resulted to the Jews from their unbelief, and which, in a greater or less degree, they have endured since the overthrow of their temple, city, and political existence. In their distress they turn to Abraham for comfort — long for cool water to allay their thirst — or some refreshing evidence from him that the Messiah whom they look for, will speedily come to their rescue. The gulf represents the various circumstances by which they have been separated so long from the Gentile nations, resisting all the influences which tend to promote or bring about their amalgamation. What is said about their refusing to hear Moses and the prophets, &c., signifies their pertinacity in rejecting the evidences of Christ's divine mission — or their extreme bigotry. Some one has said, "That the mind of a bigot is like the pupil of the eye: the more light you throw upon it, the more it contracts." This is simply

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what our Saviour meant when he said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

I cannot undertake to say that there is not a single error in the above principles of exegesis, but to my judgment, they appear easy, simple, natural, and perfectly harmonious with the universally acknowledged laws of Biblical interpretation. It is the exegesis adopted by a great majority of those divines who believe in endless punishment. If it had been in their power to have explained this parable, in harmony with their cherished creed, they, most assuredly, would have done so; but the obstacles in the way of this appeared to them insuperable. Again, it should be observed that the plan of Theophylact is consistent with the character of God, as the Father and Friend of mankind. It leads clear of the difficulties which beset those who use this portion of Scripture to prove the horrid, revolting doctrine of eternal and infinite wrath.

Another thought has, to my mind, the character and force of absolute demonstration. If there be a place where the wicked will be tormented after death, the Son of God should have told us so in terms so plain and explicit that they could not possibly be misunderstood, or explained away and resolved into metaphors merely. In every discourse, in every communication with those around him, he should have made this declaration—"*Verily, verily, I say unto you, they who die in their sins* will be doomed to suffer eternal torments." But how stands the fact? We open the Bible at the beginning of Genesis, and read attentively the five books of Moses. They are entirely silent on the subject of hell. If the antediluvians were exposed to it, they did not know it; and it is admitted that a more wicked people never existed since time began. The whole body of orthodox critics and expounders

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admit this fact. In our version of the Old Testament, the phrase *hell—to go to hell—or to be sent to hell*—means, always in the original, according to Professor Stuart, either the death of the body, or the being involved in some temporal calamity. Never, is it there used, even once, with reference to punishment after death. (See one of his last works, a new translation of the Book of Proverbs, with notes). All our clergy of every name, who read the original Bible are familiar with this fact. *They* know that *hell* in the Hebrew Scriptures never signifies a place of future, eternal woe.

The first time that the phrase "hell-fire" occurs in the New Testament is in our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5 : 22. The Rev. Albert Barnes, the most distinguished of Presbyterian commentators in the United States, paraphrases the whole verse thus: "He that hates his brother without cause is guilty of the violation of the sixth commandment, and shall be punished with a severity similar to that inflicted by the court of judgment. He that shall suffer his passions to transport him to still greater extravagances, and shall make his neighbor an object of derision and contempt (by saying Raca,) shall be exposed to still severer punishments, corresponding to that which the Sanhedrim, or great council inflicts. But he who shall load his brother with odious appellations and abusive language, shall incur the severest degree of punishment, represented by being burnt alive in the horrid and awful valley of Hinnom." The Jews perfectly understood the Saviour to tell them that, as according to their own law and custom certain offences were punished by the verdicts of the court of judgment, and graver crimes by the decisions of the Sanhedrim, while the worst acts were expiated by ignoble death in the vale of Hinnom, or Gehenna, or Hell (these three words being synonymes); even

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so all sin should now, under the Christian dispensation, be punished correspondingly. When and where? Not after death, but whenever and wherever the act of sin was committed, there shall the penalties be received." "The righteous shall be recompensed in *the earth*, much more the wicked and the sinner."

So throughout the gospels, when the original term rendered hell, is Gehenna or valley of Hinnom, it invariably refers to temporal judgments of some kind or other. There is no proof that the contemporaries of our Saviour understood by it a place of punishment or suffering after death, either limited or unlimited. "Gehenna fire is kindled in every sinful breast. Its roar is heard in the sound of the various woes which pervade the world. Its lurid flame flashes in the angry eye, and its effects are inscribed on the brow of hate. But when the evils it denotes shall have spent their force, the sin-worn, unhappy children of men shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and worship him in the beauty of holiness."

It is admitted by all orthodox critics, that Gehenna is the only word in the New Testament that is ever used to designate a place of endless punishment. Now, the apostle Paul has never once named this word in all his epistles. Nor have we any account that he ever mentioned it in his preaching, or his conversation during the long period of forty years, devoted to the teaching of Christianity to as wicked people as any now in existence. What is the inference? It is this, that Paul knew nothing, and believed nothing of eternal torments in a future state, for had he embraced this truth, he could not have been utterly silent about it. What would be thought of a minister in our day, by all orthodox Christians, who should preach, and write, and converse upon the character and purposes of God, the

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present and future condition of mankind, and their obligations to repent and be holy, during the space of forty years, and should never, in a single instance, speak of hell as a place of future discipline or punishment? Would they not, at once, pronounce him to be a Universalist of the most ultra type?

But some say that, though Paul did not, indeed, use the term hell in his preaching, yet he employed, in superabundance, synonymous words and phrases, to inculcate on his hearers the doctrine of everlasting woe beyond the grave. The same remark has often been made concerning the other New Testament writers, but it seems to me without any good reason. It is a gratuitous, unsupported assertion. Within the last thirty years, I have examined, again and again, every text and paragraph of Scripture which have been adduced in the different ages of the church, to prove the endlessness of punishment. Now, I think it is easy to convince every honest and unprejudiced inquirer, that in the original writings called inspired, from the first verse of Genesis to the last of the Apocalypse, there is not one sentence fairly interpreted, which affirms the appalling sentiment that all who die impenitent, will continue to grow more impenitent, corrupt, and wretched through an absolute eternity. In our English Bible a few texts may, indeed, be quoted, which, according to the usual, and obvious, and literal import of words in our language, might be insisted upon to support such a doctrine. But, they are all perversions—either misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the original. We have already stated that the phrase *hell*, understood as signifying a place of punishment after death, cannot be found in either the Hebrew or Greek Scriptures, yet it occurs in our version fifty-five times. Correct these erroneous translations, and the shocking theories that prevail on this solemn theme would be

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banished from the religious world. Or, even leave the momentous words *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* untranslated, and then no one, it is probable, would be led astray on this subject. Surely, no clergyman should wish to build up his peculiar system of faith by the help of pious frauds, by giving a wrong sense to any part of Scripture.

Let me present the facts and reasonings which have been presented on the Bible doctrine concerning punishment in a condensed form—in the fewest words possible. First. There is no word or form of speech in the original Scriptures which denotes a place of suffering after death. Secondly. In the New Testament, the phrases *everlasting life and everlasting punishment* are used to signify certain allotments which God has ordained for the children of men this side the grave; thus, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life everlasting." *Everlasting punishment* here means the long-continued evils which the Jews endured in the loss of their temple and city, in their national destruction, and the almost unparalleled woes which ensued. *Eternal life* in this verse signifies the happiness which Christians enjoyed on earth in the reception of divine truth, and in being exempted from the terrible calamities which were inflicted upon the Jews, the disastrous consequences of which have reached through more than eighteen hundred years. This we know from *the words* of the Saviour himself, for he declares that *this everlasting punishment and this eternal life* should begin in a few years from the time when he was then speaking—before many of the persons who were among his hearers should go down to their graves. Thirdly. Those words in the Greek language which denote an absolute eternity are never applied to punishment. They are *aphthartos*, *aphtharsia*, *akatalutos*, *athanasia*, &c. These terms the sacred writers

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usually employ when speaking of God's endless existence, the immortality of men, and the eternity of heaven. *Aionios*, or *everlasting punishment*, throughout the Scriptures is a formula, used to express limited or temporal calamities. Never, in a single instance, does it mean eternal suffering—suffering that is literally endless.

Fourthly. The phrase "*The end of this world*," so often occurring in the parables of our Saviour—as in those of the tares and the wheat, the net that was cast into the sea, &c.—never refers to the ending of this physical globe, or the world itself literally understood, but invariably to the end of the Jewish age, or Mosaic dispensation. In the original the word rendered world is *aion*, or age, era, epoch, &c. The term in the Greek for world is *kosmos*. There is not a passage in the New Testament that speaks of the ending of the *kosmos*. Suppose the people in general knew this, would they not doubt either the discernment or the fairness of our translators?

Fifthly. The following language, the "world to come," or the "future world" in the gospel, never means the state of existence after death. Among the Jews of our Saviour's day, it signified simply the age of Christ, or the Christian dispensation, which to them was future, and was called the *aion* to come, as distinguished from the one under which they were then living—the Jewish or Mosaic *aion*.

Sixthly. The threatenings of Scripture are, in almost every instance, couched in figurative, hyperbolical language, and are to be understood with such qualifications and limitations as are necessary to harmonize them with the promises of the Bible, and the undeniable attributes of the infinite and all-perfect Father. For example take Jer. 23: 39, 40—"Therefore, behold I, even I, will utterly forget you, and forsake you, and the city which I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my

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presence. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame which shall not be forgotten." Please observe the terms "utterly forget," "forsake," "cast out of my presence," "an everlasting reproach," "perpetual shame," &c. Did God mean all this, concerning stubborn, foolish, degraded Israel and Jerusalem, in the literal, direct, extreme, and most obvious sense of the language used? This question is answered in the following words: "For thus saith the Lord, after seventy years be accomplished in Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive" (Jer. 28 : 10—14.) Thus it is certain that the prophet used the terms, "utter forgetfulness," "utter abandonment," "everlasting shame and reproach," in the import of Oriental hyperbole, merely to designate a punishment which continued only through the space of seventy years. Notice seventy years is an *everlasting* period, according as the word is employed by the Sacred Writers.

Are not both of the passages above quoted from the book of Jeremiah true? But can they both be true in their most plain, literal, simple, natural, obvious, direct and original import? Did God UTTERLY forget and forsake the Jewish people? Yet after seventy years, did he not remember them in mercy? Did he cast them and their city out of his presence *forever*, and bring literally an *everlasting reproach* upon them? Yet, we read after seventy years, did

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he restore them, their city, temple, and nation to favor and honor. And Paul says, speaking of the Jews in his day, or rather speaking of the future fortunes of the Jewish people — "The deliverer shall come out of Sion, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and so *all Israel* shall be saved." Yes, Paul asserts that the very persons, who in the parable of the sheep and the goats, are said to go away into everlasting punishment, will one day be delivered from sin and wretchedness, by the merciful Saviour of all mankind. Ponder these indubitable facts, ye who render the threatenings of Scripture in their most literal sense in order to prove the doctrine of endless, merciless, unnecessary, and useless suffering.

I will present two more passages from the same book, further to illustrate this point: "Thus saith the Lord, thy bruise is incurable! But I will restore health unto thee, and will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord." Was the "bruise" of Israel literally *incurable?* Did God promise to heal wounds absolutely *incurable?* A child can see that here occurs a flat contradiction unless we have recourse to the laws of figurative language to help us out of the difficulty.

"Whoso readeth let him understand," says the Bible. If men would do so, they would no longer take for granted, that the following passages are to be taken in the extreme, unbending, rigidly literal sense of the words which they contain. "These shall go away into EVERLASTING punishment. He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath NEVER forgiveness neither in this world, nor in the world to come,—that is, neither in the Jewish nor Christian dispensation. For it is IMPOSSIBLE for those who were once enlightened, &c., if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance. It is IMPOSSIBLE for a rich man to enter into the king-

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dom of heaven. Who, then, can be saved? Jesus answered, with men this is IMPOSSIBLE, but with God all things are possible." Yea, though I have said that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, yet, God is able to accomplish this difficult enterprise — he is able to convert and save the soul of a rich man. It was a common figure of speech in our Saviour's time, among the Jews, to say of any difficult performance, that the thing was IMPOSSIBLE, meaning thereby simply that it was improbable, or the hardest thing to be achieved within the range of divine power. So we say it is *impossible* to reform a drunkard, meaning only that it is very *difficult* to accomplish his salvation. It is certain, then, that the threatenings of Scripture are expressed in those figurative terms, which, fairly interpreted, never signify eternal ruin in the spiritual world.

Seventhly. But the promises that everlasting life shall be finally bestowed on all men, and that God is incapable of resting in the incurable sinfulness and destruction of his erring children, are conveyed in language of the most literal, plain, obvious, direct and unambiguous import. "The Lord will not cast off forever; but though he cause grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies: for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity — I will not contend forever, neither will I always be wroth; for the spirit would fail before me, and the souls which I have made. He is gracious and full of compassion: infinite, eternal, and unchanging in his mercies. He doth not punish forever, because he delighteth in mercy. As high as heaven is above earth, so great is his compassion. As far as the east is from the west, so far will he remove our transgressions from

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us. Even as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity sinners. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust."

"Love your enemies, that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven, for he so loveth the whole world (all mankind) that he sent forth his Son to save them. Be ye perfect therefore, (in goodness to the evil and unthankful,) even as your father who is in heaven, is perfect (in his goodness to them). Therefore, as by the offence of one *judgment* came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto *justification of life.* For as by one man's disobedience all men were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, all shall be made righteous. That as *far* as sin hath reigned, even so *far* might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. For the whole human race shall finally be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. As thou hast given me power over all mankind, that I might give unto them eternal life. And all which thou hast given me shall come unto me, and none of those who come unto me shall be cast out. For God hath concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. He is able even to subdue all things to himself. When all things shall be subdued unto him, (for death the last enemy of man shall be destroyed,) then shall the Son also himself be subdued unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. For as in Adam *all* die, so also all shall be made alive in Christ (in holiness). There shall be a resurrection of all the dead, both just and unjust. Every knee shall bow to him, and confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father. God is love. Love worketh no ill," (no real, final, absolute injury to its object). Such clear, precious promises are found

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on almost every page of the Bible. I have presented a few merely as samples. No art of exegesis, no metaphysics, no logic, no learning, no eloquence can make them teach anything less than the eventual holiness and happiness of all mankind. And I wonder, that any Unitarian clergyman with these passages before him, can say that the New Testament has left the final destiny of the wicked in "a state of awful uncertainty." Their ultimate restoration is affirmed in Scripture, in texts much more numerous, and equally explicit with those which are adduced to prove the unity of the Divine Nature.

But gentlemen have often put to me the following question: "If you speak habitually, openly, and without reserve, of that glorious future destiny in store for our race — if you make it a prominent topic out of the pulpit, in conversation in the social circle; when ministering by the beds of the sick and dying, and in your funeral services, is there not great danger that the careless, and impenitent will derive therefrom encouragement to go on in their transgressions with utter unconcern and recklessness? Is there not a probability that they will say within themselves, 'If I am to be made a happy immortal at some future period, no matter how distant, — two hundred millions or billions of years hence, why should I impose upon myself the restraints of a religious life. It is better now, to give myself up to the unrestrained indulgence of my passions, and revel in the joys of sense, till I sink into the tomb. All will come right at last, for in the unimaginable evolutions of a future existence, I shall be exalted to the possession of angelic excellence and bliss.'" I have presented the objection in its fullest strength.

In reply, I would say first, supposing the criticism to be just, against whom does it really bear testimony. Not the humble author of these lines, nor

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any living teacher within the bounds of Christendom. But, it assails the inspired writers themselves — the Son of God, and his apostles. More than this it impeaches the perfections of our Creator, for Jesus assures us, that the promises which have just been quoted are not his promises, but that they were given to him by his Father. They came forth from the depth of eternity, the centre of infinitude, the heart of the universe, the bosom of Him in whom we have our existence. Can they, then, be in favor of licentiousness? Shall mortal man affect to be more wise and just than his Maker? Shall we prefer the dim, feeble, flickering rush-light of earthly wisdom, to the meridian effulgence of heavenly day? Does not He, who made the human mind, know best what words will reach most effectively its hidden springs of action, and stir with an healing influence, the deep fountains of its spiritual life?

Fortunately, we can appeal to an apostle for conclusive arguments respecting this point. On one occasion, when Paul preached the certain and glorious character of man's final destination, an objector said, "Will not wicked men, emboldened by your doctrines, continue in sin, because divine grace is so superabounding?" How did the apostle reply? "Ye do err," he says, "for whoever believes fully in the riches of God's mercy, as unfolded in the Gospel, must of necessity be sanctified. Sin can no longer reign over him. He hath passed from death unto life."

This is reasonable. Take the hardest case imaginable. Suppose we could put into the soul of the worst sinner living, a realizing sense of the sublime revelation, that we shall live forever — that after more years, ages, centuries and cycles shall have rolled off, than there are drops of water in the ocean or sands on its shores, we shall still live, and cast-

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ing our eyes backward through the long vista of the past, look forward upon scenes of joy, improvement and glory succeeding each other, through the fresh, divine, and beauteous wonders of an ever-opening eternity! Contrasted with a prospect so magnificent and inconceivable, would not the most tempting allurements of earth fade away from his sight, shrink into nothing and vanity — be despised or forgotten! They would appear to him like contemptible trifles — less than the playthings and gewgaws which little children use in the sports of a summer's afternoon. Yes, a firm, undoubting faith in this glorious truth, would cause him to become in a single day, an earnest, consistent, happy, and rejoicing disciple of Jesus. Instantly would he exchange the garments of deformity, for the bright, heavenly robes of immortal worth and wisdom. His soul would be nerved with divine energies, enabling him to resist every form of depravity and corruption. With holy scorn and indifference, he would without a moment's hesitation dash to the ground the most sparkling cup of unlawful indulgence. Never, again, would that man grovel, or plunge into the mire of moral debasement. No sinner can truly, with all his heart, renounce this world, till another is presented to his sight infinitely more winning and attractive to his affections than anything which he beholds within the narrow horizon of time and sense.

It may be asked, does the Gospel, in order to induce sinners to repent, exhibit nothing to their view but scenes of hope and love, beauty and bliss? Does it make no appeal whatever to their fears? O, yes. It presents to them those dark and terrific forms of retribution this side the grave, which no transgressor ever did or can escape. It tells them that the inevitable wages of sin is death. Let me describe experiences which I have often witnessed.

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Set before you the picture of a young man just settling in New Orleans. He has noble and promising endowments. The fire of genius flashes in his eye; the best resolutions nerve and animate his bosom. But at length the syrens that pervade all cities, more or less, triumph over him, and he is drawn into forbidden ways. He falls, and O, what a fall! It is superfluous to describe it, even were it possible. Suffice it to say, that in a short time he is bereft of health, virtue, reputation, property, business, and lastly the means of subsistence. His most intimate friends and acquaintances desert him, which I admit is wrong. Soon we see him before the Criminal Court, in tatters and pollution. Next I am called to visit him in the Police prison, amid horrid oaths, blasphemies, and the most revolting spectacles. As I have clasped his cold hand, and knelt down by his pallet of straw, to commend his departing spirit into the hand of God who gave it, no words could express my emotions, when contrasting the dark scene around me, with that calm, beautiful home where he was born and nurtured—where a father's wisdom was his protection—where he listened to the gentle tones of a mother's undying love, and the sweet music of a sister's kindly voice. I have seen him breathe his last, and his pale, emaciated form not laid with many tears by surviving relatives, beneath the fresh, green sods of his native hills, but like the carcass of a brute, thrown roughly into a cart, to be carried back to the Potter's Field, and huddled among the confused remains of the fallen, unwept, unhonored, and unblest. Oh! who can worthily describe or conceive of such a hell as this!

If by conversation, by preaching, or by pictorial representations like those of Hogarth, or any other means, young men could be brought to see the *hell-fire* that is constantly burning in New Orleans, Boston, New York, and similar places, and which is

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sure to consume all those who tread, impenitently, the delusive ways of transgression, they would shrink with horror from all moral contagion, and walk only on the solid ground—the *terra firma* of sound reason, of good sense, of Christian faith, and heavenly wisdom. A single glimpse of this temporal hell would do more to reform and save young men than all the threats of vengeance in a future, unimaginable existence, which the pulpit has uttered for the last fifteen hundred years. Indeed, such threats only serve to render sin more unyielding, and sinners more incorrigible.

With regard to sin and its awful consequences, if a clergyman, instead of preaching the gospel faithfully, substitute in its room the theories and philosophy of uninspired doctors, he will exert a very bad influence on his hearers. Such a pulpit is undeserving of the patronage of good people. It is an evil, seductive, corrupting institute, which, under a sacred and venerated name, sows broadcast among men the seeds of spiritual death, when it professes to be diffusing the principles of sound morals and undefiled Christianity. Deep, dark, and rapid is the current of depravity which sweeps through every large city. What a dreadful thought that Christian pulpits should be reared and maintained, which only help to swell this ominous tide that is hurrying so many mortals to destruction!

What does the Son of God say to persuade sinners to repent? He tells them that they could as easily make the mountains sink down to the level of the plains at their base, or standing on the sea-shore, by speaking a word, to cause the incoming tide to recede, or stretch forth their arms and grasp the planets, and arrest their course, as to find real happiness in the pursuits of a sin-loving and pleasure-seeking life. He solemnly proclaims that there is no solid peace this side the grave without

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the attainments of holiness. He assures us that devoid of these we shall be miserable every hour, day, week, month, and year of our waking existece. His language runs thus: "If thou art a sinner, thou must be born again; if thou art tempted to do wrong, thou must resist, and overcme this temptation; if thou harborest guilty passions in thy bosom, thou must deny and eradicate them; if thou art a bad man, thou must become a good man, or never enter the kingdom of heaven." These words have been thus paraphrased: "Depend upon it the mind of man is so builded, so fashioned, so exactly balanced, and so exquisitely touched, that sin introduced into it, is the direct misery; that every unholy thought falls upon it as a drop of poison; that every guilty desire operates to spread through the delicate texture and frame-work of the soul, the plague-spot of evil, and the blight of death. The mind of man has been so constructed by the Almighty Architect that it can find rest and peace only in the love and practice of immortal virtue." (Dewey.)

If these views of the wants inherent in human nature were fully embraced by all the inhabitants of earth, there would not be an impenitent sinner in our world. "Righteousness would run down the streets of every city like a mighty river." No edifices would be built therein, no commerce carried on, no business transacted, no recreation even indulged, but in strict subordination to the purification and welfare of the soul, as the great, ultimate, and paramount end of existence. In that case, all would feel that without Evangelical piety, life has no noble, wise, worthy, or adequate object; that human existence unblest with religion, sinks below the level of the brute; that to the eye of the unbelievers not a single ray of light can shine upon the darkness of the tomb; no effulgence beam forth

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from the perspective of that eternity upon which we shall all soon enter.

Yet if the Saviour's preaching concerning present retribution were understood and appreciated by all mankind, then all would hear the voice of God speaking to them from heaven and earth—days, times, and seasons—from all that mingled web of ordinances, appointments, fates, events, trials, and vicissitudes which fill up the short span between the cradle and the grave. Yes, they would hear the voice of God through every nerve, fibre, power, faculty, and element of their moral and physical constitution, as well as through the lips of Jesus, assuring them that in order to be happy for a single week, "they must live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. I repeat it, if men paid due heed to the solemn and sublime instructions of the gospel, as to the inevitable results of sin this side the grave, they would all become good—would all make the interests of true, vital, experimental religion the grand, urgent, instant, intense, unutterable, and all-absorbing concern of their life and their being. Then, these mysterious scenes of time, these affecting experiences, these momentous interests, these objects of affection, precious as our own souls, would contribute surely, and in ways beyond the ken of mortals, to prepare them for the happy hour, when they will be ushered into the higher wonders, joys, and glories of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them. I cannot find in all the teachings of Christ so much as an allusion to a condition of suffering in a *post-mortem* state of existence.

I am aware that it is said by many learned, wise, and good men, that the minister who does not hold out to sinners the awful danger of interminable

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punishment for the finally impenitent, fails to address to his hearers the most powerful and persuasive motives to repentance and holiness. But was not the preaching of Jesus Christ a perfect model of that sort of appeal best adapted to promote the conversion of the wicked? Yet he never hinted that they were exposing themselves to endless punishment by their contumacy and disobedience. In my judgment, the fear of such a doom hereafter, has never converted a sinner—has never prevented a single sin. In the nature of the case, it is impossible that it should produce such results. As an inducement to avoid sinning, it is utterly powerless. "However formidable the appearance which the preacher's vivid imagination, or the printer's ink may give to this hell of theology, the hardened sinner looks upon it as unconcernedly as the little child gazes upon a caged and chained lion in a menagerie, with the perfect certainty that it cannot come forth to hurt any one—to bite and devour. It is out of the question to make obdurate sinners anxious about what may overtake them at a period so remote as the ages of a world eternal. When he is charged with a villainous resolution, and the nerves are braced for the executing of crime, the thought of a hell to be endured ages hence, in the state eternal, cannot stay the hand of the transgressor." He can be restrained by nothing but the well-grounded apprehension of the judgment or sufferings that misconduct may draw upon him in the present world. Besides, the threat of future woe is rendered entirely nugatory by the doctrine which its advocates universally preach, that he who through his whole life has been an open, reckless, hard-hearted sinner, may at the last gasp, by one moment's sincere regret and reliance upon the vicarious atonement, escape the punishment which his transgressions deserve, and have his polluted

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soul instantaneously invested with celestial loveliness. A more atrocious, abominable, demoralizing sentiment cannot be found in all the dark annals of Atheism and Infidelity.

Let it be remembered that if a person were to abstain from every sinful thought and deed, say his prayers habitually and earnestly, read his Bible every day, keep the Sabbath holy, attend punctually on the church and its sacraments, merely from the fear of hell after death, in the sight of the Omniscient One, he would be just as low in the scale of true religion as the most worthless vagabond in the streets. An infinitely better member of society he would be, of course, than the unscrupulous reprobate, but equally removed from the kingdom of heaven. A religion based upon fear merely, united with corrupt desires, is the lowest degree of moral debasement to which man can sink this side the grave. Such is the teaching of inspiration. "There is no fear in love (real religion); it casteth out fear, because fear hath torment, (is hell). We love him because he first loved us."

I go further. It is not simply a fact that the preaching of infinite wrath has done no good; it has done immense hurt—it has operated beyond the power of words to express, to degrade and debase the human mind—to fill the world with crimes and sufferings. It has turned a beautiful and heaven-descended religion into a system of horror and absurdity. It has given to what is called Christianity, dark, harsh, revolting, and malevolent features. It has tracked its course sometimes with blood and fire, and always with the worst passions and consequences. A queen of Spain, when the Inquisition was first ordained, said, "Since God will burn heretics forever in hell, it is right for the Church to burn them to death here." She reasoned right, conceding the truth of her premises. If God in-

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flicts torment on his enemies, why may we not treat ours in a similar manner? Should we be more noble and forgiving than our Creator? Yes, this doctrine has turned the hearts of Christians (so called) into adamant. It has armed the human tongue with the sting of vipers. It has caused the press to pour forth rivers of gall and wormwood. It has led the pulpit to suppress the messages of peace and good will, and in their room to substitute the bitter denunciations of the polemic, and the horrid menaces of everlasting woe. It has broken up families that had been united by the tenderest ties of affinity and affection. It has alienated friends and neighbors. It has sundered the dearest bonds of society. It has caused the best men to be hated and persecuted through life, and at last to be consigned to the wheel, the rack, the gibbet, or the flames. It has darkened, desolated, and ruined the most precious interests of humanity. It has done more hurt than all the forms of infidelity on earth.

Dr. Channing says: "This doctrine has caused a religion which was given to fill us with generous hopes, to become an instrument of servile and torturing fear. What was designed by God to produce universal benevolence, has reared the inquisition, kindled the fires of the martyr, broke men into subjection to priesthoods, ministers, and human creeds, and so turned the revelations of mercy into engines against the child, the trembling female and the ignorant adult, that the skeptic has been emboldened to charge on religion, the chief miseries and degradation of our race. The religion which Christ sealed with his blood, rightly viewed, frees the mind from *all fear of outward penalties*—from every fear but the *fear of doing wrong.*

I lately read a discourse whose object was to show that the dread of eternal misery exerts such a salutary, efficient restraint upon the ignorant and

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vicious masses, that without it no form of civil government even could be established and maintained among men—that the fear of hell is the basis of science, social refinement, and civilization—that the good conduct of the majority everywhere depends on their undoubting belief in the reality of eternal retribution. What a preposterous sentiment? Nobody has respect or confidence for a person who is restrained by wrong acts only by means of terror—whose conduct is dictated by no higher considerations than those embraced in the fear of pains and penalties. Persons of this description, instead of helping to keep civil society together, exert a direct, positive influence to distract, weaken, and debase it; but the men who love virtue for *virtue's sake*, religion for *religion's sake*, and a good life for a good *life's sake*—these are the individuals who are the soul and support of every well-regulated community.

You desire a servant; and there are set before you, we will suppose, two of the same age, of the same mental and physical energies—A. and B. But you are informed that the good conduct of A, depends entirely on his fear of punishment, while B, is a person who is actuated by the principles of honor and conscientiousness. To whom would you give the preference? You would hardly take A, on any terms. But such a servant as B, would be worth a great deal more than the gold requisite for his service. You are about to erect a building. Two architects are accessible, of equal ability; one of whom is governed only by the fear of law, the other is noble and upright in his motives and principles. Would you not prefer vastly to deal with the latter? So it is in every department of secular life. With respect to the dullest man, he would regard it as a downright insult to be charged with being influenced in his religious conduct solely or

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chiefly by the hope of escaping the torments of hell hereafter? In the scale of moral turpitude, we can hardly imagine a more degraded character than that of one who abstains from doing wrong merely from policy, and not from inherent taste or affection.

The doctrine of future punishment is more extensively believed in Mexico, Spain, Austria and Russia, than in any other portion of the civilized globe. If dread of endless misery is so salutary in its influence on the human character, why are not the people there better than we find them to be? Why are the masses in those lands so degraded, poor, and down-trodden? What mean the almost unheard of oppression and cruelty of their rulers and priests? God have mercy on the people who rely upon the fear of endless punishment for that bond of union and good fellowship essential to civil society. Imagine a child brought up, if it were possible, under this principle of action, would he not be as thoroughly depraved as it is possible to become this side the grave? Go all over the United States, and you will find as a general fact, that among all classes, those who are stimulated to religious action only by the object of shunning the deleterious consequencess of sin in a post mortem state of existence, belong to the most cold, narrow, selfish, and unprincipled portions of society. A community filled with such persons would be a thousand times more fallen and depraved, than a community of absolute atheists.

Well, then, what shall be said to sinners to effect their conversion? I answer, speak to them the same words which Jesus and his apostles did. They have laid down the great fundamental, universal law of divine retribution. It is *that all the sins committed in this world will be exactly and perfectly punished in this world.* Aside from considerations relating to the love of principle, of justice, and

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benevolence, in the extended sense of those terms, the certainty of an adequate punishment for sin in the present world is more efficacious than all the hells which the human imagination can conceive of, as destined for the finally impenitent in a future state.

The object of all men is happiness, and they will take the road which in their view leads to the greatest good. Jesus and his apostles teach that the only and infallible means of happiness on earth is right conduct — holiness of heart and life. A person who cordially receives this teaching, morally speaking, cannot be tempted to do wrong. For how can he do that which he knows of necessity will make him miserable? Why should he not be virtuous when he regards such a life as indispensably requisite to secure his immediate, and largest temporal happiness? If all understood and appreciated the instructions of Christ, without delay, all would become his earnest, consistent, triumphant, and rejoicing disciples. Human society is best where the highest degree of love is exercised towards God, as the Father and Friend of all men, and the purest sentiments of benevolence unite neighbor to neighbor, and where mankind fully realize that present happiness is strictly identified with noble and righteous conduct.

The theory that sin produces pleasure as to this world, and all its deleterious consequences may be escaped by repentance any time previous to the last breath, is most destructive to the interests of morality and religion. It is a *carte blanche* permitting the sinner to do what he pleases, with the conviction that by one mental act of contrition before he dies, he will be able to expunge, or wash out all the stains of his heart and character, and clothe himself with the robes of wisdom and worth which angels wear. Was a more dangerous sentiment ever broached?

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Go to any Penitentiary, ask each of the inmates if he would have committed the offence for which he suffers, if he had known beforehand that the punishment would have certainly, and so soon followed the commission? They will all confess that it was the hope of impunity which led them into transgression. So it is under the government of the Most High. Sinners are led to imagine that they can sin without exposing themselves to the merited penalty. The New Testament destroys this illusion, and convinces those inclined to evil, that wrong doing will inevitably involve them in suffering here, this side the grave. If all men thoroughly believed in this truth, all would strive to be immaculate, love their Creator, subdue their passions, make attainments in holiness, and live as becomes the children of God, and the disciples of his Son.

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CHAPTER X.

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES CONCERNING THE RESURRECTION AND A FUTURE STATE.

Of late, the religious world has been inundated with books and sermons on Spiritualism, Future Retribution or Discipline, Future Repentance, Future Moral Progression, an Intermediate State or Purgatory, and other topics relating to the ultimate destination of mankind. I have read many of the ablest, and most celebrated of these productions, and have been much gratified with their profound learning, ingenious arguments, and captivating literature. But their premises seem to me, in general, to be hypothetical—*assumed* merely, not *proved*. Human theories, philosophy and speculation on the subject of death and its consequences, however pleasing and magnificent, will not satisfy our deepest spiritual wants and aspirations. Because they are at the best conjectural. They may or may not be true. I propose to devote a few pages to the question, "What does the Divine Word teach concerning the resurrection and a future life?

First, it affirms that all mankind, both the good and bad, will be raised from the dead and exist forever in a future world. This doctrine has been the universal belief of Christendom in every age. The New Testament abounds with texts declaring its truth, which are so often quoted, and so well known, that it is unnecessary to produce them. The phi-

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losophers of Paul's time often propounded to him this interrogatory: How can the dead be raised? How is it possible? The apostle showed the possibility of the resurrection by appealing to the operations of the divine power around us, which we daily behold. What rational person can doubt that He who created heaven and earth, the sea and all that is therein; whose pleasure called the physical universe into existence, and constantly sustains it in order and beauty, is able if he chooses, to raise the dead? It is self-evident that the great Being who bestows on us this temporal existence, can cause our intellectual and moral life to cross the gulf of death, the line of time, and the boundaries of the visible creation, and to continue on forever. To deny the possibility of the resurrection is a puerility undeserving of serious notice. The same power that sustains us in life a single day, is competent to sustain us therein throughout eternity. Now, the chief glory of the Gospel is the revelation of the Father's almighty and immutable purpose, to abolish death by Christ, and make the race of man immortal. The arguments drawn from reason to prove a future life are very well in their place. They answer many important purposes. But the believer in the Son of God rests his faith as to the resurrection entirely on divine authority. He wants no other proof of the doctrine but that which is derived from the universally acknowledged facts and teachings recorded in the New Testament.

It may not be irrelevant to remark here, that the philosophers who flourished eighteen hundred years ago, in Roman and Grecian countries, embraced the theory lately put forth in that famous work called the "Vestiges of Creation." They held that the world had existed from eternity, in obedience to blind and unintelligent laws, or fate, and that there exists nothing in the universe distinct

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from matter. They taught that an event like the resurrection of Jesus was impossible, because the present course of things, the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, and the successive generations and destructions of all animals and vegetables, can neither be interrupted nor modified by anything extraneous, but must be perpetuated forever.

The miracles of Christ and his apostles completely ignored this atheistical system. They demonstrated from experience that there exists a supreme, invisible power, independent of, above, and superior to all the known properties of matter, and the physical laws by which they were then governed. The old philosophers saw at once that if the miracles of Christianity were true, they must have emanated from a controlling power invested with the attributes of freedom and intelligence, a power which in the Bible is called God. Therefore, they stoutly resisted the strongest evidence by which the resurrection of Jesus is supported — evidence that cannot be denied without destroying the credibility of all historical documents, and overturning the only foundation of belief in human testimony as to past events. The same ground is taken by scientific opposers of miracles in our day. No evidence, they assert, can prove the reality of our Saviour's resurrection, because it is a supernatural event. It is an assumption, an axiom in their philosophy, that such an event is not within the limits of possibility. Concerning this description of reasoners, it has been said, "What they want in knowledge, they supply by sufficiency and pride. When they have looked about them as far as they can, they conclude there is no more to be seen; when they are at the end of their line, they are at the bottom of the ocean; when they have shot their best, they feel quite sure none ever did, or ever can shoot better or beyond it. Their own reason they hold to be the

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certain measure of truth, and their own experience the standard of all that is possible in nature."

In the next place let us see whether revelation defines plainly the general characteristics which all mankind will possess in the resurrection state. Most clergymen teach that the grave is a gate, or door-way, through which man steps or passes from one room or apartment of our Father's house into another, without undergoing any essential change as to memory, consciousness, moral endowments, or moral character. Dr. Channing, in his discourse on Future Retribution, expresses the opinion, that whatever of sin, guilt, dishonor, shame, sorrow, and weakness a man has at the moment of death, they will go along with him across the line of time, and cling to him, and make him wretched after his resurrection into the deathless, immortal state of being. The Doctor also says, that we are not told in any part of Scripture, that these post mortem sinners will ever be reformed, and admitted to eternal happiness. Most all the ministers with whom I have conversed coincide with Dr. Channing on this subject. But nothing is clearer to my mind than the repugnance of this theory to the word of God.

Christ and his apostles have set the subject in a very different light. They say in the most plain, emphatic words, that all mankind without exception, both just and unjust shall be raised from the dead. This doctrine no believer in Jesus denies. Even Calvinism admits that all the wicked will exist forever beyond the grave. But our Lord declares that "in the resurrection," (not at some future time after its commencement) "all men will be as the angels in heaven: they will be the children of God, *because* they are the children of the resurrection." In addition he affirms, that "all the dead live unto God,"—to him they are living, (not dead), to him they are in the resurrection state. "In the resur-

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rection all men will be angels." No one pretends to say that angels *sin*. No one believes that angels in heaven are the subjects of moral imperfection, shame, and sorrow. It is self-evident that the word *Angel* in the remarks of our Saviour, designates a character of the highest state of purity and perfection. It is also taught in the same discourse with the Sadducees, that the *resurrection* is a process which metamorphoses sinful men into angels. For, Jesus says expressly, they are the children of God, *because* they are the children of the resurrection. In other words the resurrection made them holy, godlike. A man by faith, repentance, and good deeds this side the grave, could no more turn himself into an angel — a sinless being, than he could create a world. Whatever he may be here on earth, he must nevertheless pass through the resurrection in order to be freed from moral imperfections.

The Apostle Paul expands and illustrates this idea of the resurrection set forth by Christ, in his first letter to the Corinthians, 15th chapter. How beautiful, sublime, clear, comprehensive, and thrillingly important is this portion of the Bible! Paul begins by saying that death the last enemy shall be destroyed. "Death can be destroyed," says Adam Clarke, "only by making all men immortal." Furthermore, the apostle teaches that all who enter the future state will be changed from sin to holiness, from dishonor to glory, from weakness to power, from the natural state to the spiritual state, from the earthy to the heavenly, from corruption to incorruption, and from mortality to immortality. He affirms that as all men *here* bear the image of the earthy, so *hereafter* all shall bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this

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mortal must put on immortality," &c. That the law laid down in the last named text comprehends entire humanity, nobody denies.

But it is contended, that, although the finally impenitent will be raised from the dead, and made to live forever, yet their bodies in the future world, differing essentially in nature or organization from those of the saints, will be susceptible of ever-increasing sin, sorrow, and degradation through eternity. The strongest text which they refer to in support of this theory, is John 5: 28, 29. It reads thus: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

A celebrated doctor of divinity preached in a church close by me a few days ago, who explained these words in the following terms. "The Son of God, here, speaks of a resurrection from the grave to damnation, and bases a resurrection to life on the condition of having done good; and therefore as all men are not virtuous at the time of their death, it is certain that all men will not be raised to spiritual life, and consequently Universalists are wrong in teaching that there is no damnation after the resurrection." At first sight, this argument may seem to be fair and conclusive, but in my opinion it is sophistical and inconclusive. The reasons which induce me to think so are as follows:

To understand the words in question it is necessary to notice the occasion which prompted their utterance. Our Saviour had just healed a man on the Sabbath-day, and his cure had produced a great sensation among the people. The Jews, as was usual on such ocasions, were exceedingly disturbed, and, it is said, persecuted Jesus and sought to kill him, because he had done this wonderful work on the Sab-

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bath-day. Jesus replied by saying: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." In the exercise of a cavilling spirit, his enemies construed this declaration into the claim of an absolute equality with God. This sophistry he answered thus. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise; for the Father loveth the Son, showeth him all things that himself doeth; and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may all marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will, for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me hath *now* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life (is already raised from the dead.) Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and *now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not, then, at this, for the hour is coming *and now is*," &c.

Here the Saviour refers to the quickening influence of faith in him, and its power to free the soul from condemnation; to the fact that he had received from God the right to execute judgment upon the wicked; and lastly that such judgment would be inflicted immediately—*now*, whilst that generation was alive. This announcement he often made, as we learn from the other Evangelists. It is

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certain to my mind, therefore, that the above quotations are applicable only to events, which are not future to us, but which occurred about eighteen hundred years ago, just before, and at the close of the Jewish dispensation. I will give the views on this portion of Scripture expressed by several Trinitarian expounders, who believed the doctrine of endless torments, in the future life.

Lightfoot has written thus: "These words, John 5: 28. 29, might be applied to a spiritual resurrection, as were the former, (for so, *coming out of graves meaneth* in Ezek. 37: 12,) the words of the verse following being only translated and explained thus: *And they shall come forth, they that do good,* after they hear his voice in the gospel, to the resurrection of life, *and they that do evil,* after they hear the gospel, *unto the resurrection of damnation.*"

Rev. Newcome Cappe, of the English Church, a Trinitarian, and firm believer in future punishment, gives the following paraphrase of John 5: 28, 29. "Let not what I say amaze you; suffer not yourselves to be lost in groundless hesitating and unprofitable wonder; believe me, for it is true, not only that the hour is very near at hand, when some, who are now perfectly inattentive and insensible to my call, shall hear the voice in which I will address them from my approaching state of exaltation, and being obedient thereto shall live; but it is alike true, that though yet further off, the time is at no great distance, within the compass of this present generation, when all that are in their graves (morally considered,) who at present sit in darkness, and the shadow of death—the whole body of the Jewish people — shall hear the voice of the Son of God, summoning them to judgment; and being then at length all awakened to perceive who and what he is, shall come forth out of their graves, their present state of darkness and ignorance, to a new state of

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mind—to a resurrection, which to those who have been obedient to the calls of Providence, shall issue in the preservation of their lives, amidst the calamities which shall overwhelm their country to those who have refused to hearken to them, shall issue in their condemnation, to fall among them that fall, and to take their share in all the bitterness of the disasters that are hastening to involve this country. (Matthew 25: 10—13, and other places.) Though I am now low and undistinguished, yet I am appointed to execute judgment upon this *untoward generation.*"

He then refers to numerous texts of Scripture to show that the word *resurrection*, throughout the Bible is applied figuratively to designate certain changes which individuals and communities experience in the present world; I will mention some of them. "In the graves, among the tombs, sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. Matthew 4: 16. Luke 1: 79. See John 3: 18—21." He that believeth on him is not condemned, &c., (Comp. Eph. 2: 1.) "And you hath he quickened, who were *dead* in trespasses and sins." Isa. 24: 19. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise," &c. (Comp, Deut. 32d chap.) "His doctrine shall *enliven* men, as the dew the herb." Hosea 6: 2. "After two days shall he *revive* us, in the third day he will *raise us up*, and we shall live in his sight." (Exek. 37)—taken in a spiritual sense by the apostle, Rom. 11: 15. What shall the receiving of them be, but life *from the dead.* Ezekial says to the Jewish nation when in captivity: "Thus saith the Lord God, I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you again into the land of Israel, and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O, my people, and brought you out of your graves."

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"Then, we ask, if Ezekiel could, with propriety, use such terms to foretell the rising of the Jews from a lower to a higher state of natural existence, could not the Saviour, when the nation was again depressed in a similar manner, with the greatest propriety, use the language we are considering, in a *figurative* sense? Metaphors taken from the Old Testament were perfectly familiar and intelligent to his hearers. Morally, religiously, and politically, the nation were in their graves. The number among them was extremely limited, who had any proper regard for virtue. Out of this state of degredation the Saviour called them: and they that had done good came forth to the *resurrection of life* — to be elevated to a higher civil and social condition, to enjoy the peace and the security of the Saviour's kingdom: but they who had done evil came forth to *damnation* — to suffer the calamities which for ages had been accumulating against them. They could not shield themselves behind the battlements they had erected; they could not hide themselves in their graves till the overflowing scourge was passed, but were compelled to come forth to the resurrection of *damnation.* The word *damnation* here signifies all the woes to which, as a nation, they were doomed by being taken and subjected to the dominion of the Romans."

In Rev. 20: 5, the calling of the Gentiles is termed the *first resurrection.* "It would," says Lightfoot, "have prevented a multitude of errors, if the phrases *the last day, the day of the Lord, the end of the world, the new heavens and new earth, the dead raised up,* &c., had been understood according to their real import in the discourses of our Lord." In the Jerusalem Gemara it is said, "The righteous in death, even, are still alive, (with respect to the righteous there is no dying,) but the wicked, even in life, may be said to be dead." "Awake thou that sleepest,

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and arise from the *dead*, and *Christ shall give thee light*," or life. So we learn from Matthew 24: 15, that the sleep spoken of in Daniel 12: 2, is expressive of that moral death from which the Jews were awakened by the coming of Jesus to overthrow their city and temple.

Doddridge admits that the resurrection which we are considering may mean an *awakening* which took place eighteen hundred years ago. Professor Stuart used to say, "John 5: 28, 29 may, in perfect accordance with the rules of the Greek Grammar, and the universally acknowledged laws of Scripture exegesis, be interpreted as referring only to events which happened in the first century of the Christian era." Whitby says, "There is nothing *in*, or connected *with* this passage which requires us to apply it to a literal resurrection from death: for in Scripture the word *dead* doth often signify not those who, in a natural sense, are dead by the dissolution of the soul and body, but those who are spiritually so, as being alienated from the life of God, and dead in trespasses and sins." (See 1 Tim. 5: 6. Rev. 3: 1. Matt. 8: 22.) He then quotes Maimonides, Philo and other Jewish doctors, to show that it was a proverbial expression in our Saviour's time, that "He who lives a life of sin, is *dead* as to a life of happiness" — the true life. He also admits, that in the sacred writings the phrase *coming out of their graves*, or being *raised from the dead*, is applied to the transition of a community or nation from one condition of social order to another.

This list of authorities might be much further extended. But a sufficient number have been mentioned to accomplish my purpose: to demonstrate that we do no violence to the words of Scripture, by making John 5: 28, 29, signify the awakening of the Jews, some to gospel life, and others, who refused to hearken to Jesus, *to be condemned*, and swept

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into ruin by the calamities which utterly destroyed their nation.

It can be proved by incontrovertible arguments, that Jesus did not speak in this passage, of the literal resurrection of all mankind from the dead as preparatory to the general judgment, which it is supposed will take place in a future state. For the Son of God prefaces John 5: 28, &c., by saying, "Verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and *now* is, when the dead shall hear my voice and come forth," &c. Jesus himself, therefore, assures us that this coming forth of the dead does not refer to the general assembly of all mankind at the end of the world, in order that they may be judged for their past deeds, and receive a sentence to endless happiness or misery, as they have done good or evil, but to something which was then on the eve of being accomplished, which was impending over the people that were then alive. We cannot deny this without denying Christ's own words. It is a curious fact that there is not a place in the New Testament in which a judgment is spoken of connected with the rewarding or the punishing of the persons judged, which can be fairly referred to the immortal state of existence.

We are told in many texts that Christ will execute judgment upon mankind, when he shall "*come* to establish his kingdom." Do these words indicate a distant, future judgment, or do they refer to one then on the point of taking place? There can be no doubt how this question should be answered, if we duly heed the words of inspiration. Jesus came to judge the world when the Jewish nation and temple was destroyed. Here is the proof. Luke 9: 27, "But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God." Matt. 16: 27, 28, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father

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with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works. Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." So throughout the New Testament, *the last day*, and *the day of judgment, the day which God has appointed to judge the world by Jesus Christ*, are phrases used to signify the Gospel day, or Christian dispensation, during which Christ reigns in his kingdom, and judges the world. This reign commenced near eighteen centuries ago, and is still in progress, and will continue till universal homage be given to the Saviour. "For to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." In Matt. 10: 15; Acts 10: 42; Matt. 12: 36; Rom. 2: 16; 2 Tim. 4: 1; 1 Peter 4: 5, and every other text where Jesus is represented as judging mankind, such judgment is declared either expressly or by inference, to be in this world. The Son of God himself fixes the time when these judgments should commence by saying that they would come "before the generation then living, should pass away."

Can it be that Jesus represents himself as coming here on earth with his reward "to give every man according as his work shall be," and that eighteen hundred years ago, when, in point of fact, every man is to pass into another world — into an immortal state for his reward, at the close of Christ's mediatorial reign, — perhaps thousands of ages hence? Yet it is called the genuine doctrine of the Scriptures. It is asked what is the proof that all the instances of the judgments to be exercised by Christ, spoken of in the New Testament, are to take place in the present world?

This proof is simple, clear, direct, and perfectly conclusive. It stamps glaring falsehood upon the prevailing theory on this subject. For we are told

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in 1 Cor. 15: 22—29, that after the close of Christ's mediatorial reign, there will be no judgments, or retributions inflicted upon the children of men. Paul here asserts that the dominion of Christ shall be *universal. All* enemies shall be put under his feet. The last enemy, death, shall be conquered. The general resurrection abolishes this *last enemy*, consequently there can be no judgment after this grand consummation. The apostle teaches that, through Jesus, the good will triumph over all evil. All evil will be abolished with the general resurrection, which will annihilate death, *the last enemy.* Beyond the resurrection, no enemies to Christ, no sinners will be found? Where can sin be, then? For then all who die in Adam, will be made alive in Christ—all raised up to be endued with an angelic, incorruptible nature. It is then that Jesus having accomplished the work which God gave him to do — that of redeeming all mankind from sin, and thus proving that he was sent to be "the Saviour of the world," will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and become himself subject unto Him that God may be *all in all.*"

How then is the force of these plain declarations in favor of the universal restoration of mankind, to be avoided? Why, we are told that this is not a willing, obedient, but a forced subjection. It is a treading under foot of contumacious, and stubborn foes, subdued by an exercise of superior power. How ingenious! What a mistake! The word translated "Subdued," "Subject," "Put under feet," is applied to all men—to saints as well as sinners. Of course voluntary obedience must be meant. If it is obedience in any, it is in all. All are trodden under foot. All are treated in the same manner. Hence, if any are saved, all will be. In the New Testament, the original word here rendered *subjection* is *hupotasso*, which is often used to signify voluntary obedience. It is the word employed to express the obe-

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dience of a citizen to his government, Rom. 13: 1. of the church to Christ; Eph. 5: 22; and of men to God in order to live; Heb. 12: 9. Could anything be more conclusive? It also is used to express the obedience of the Son to the Father. All subdued to Christ, and subjection meaning a full obedience, and then Jesus subject to the Father, that God may reign" all in all! How irresistible the argument? It is self-evident, that an enemy is not truly subdued till he is converted into a friend. The victory of Christ here spoken of cannot be an exercise of superior power over his enemies, for that he possessed and exercised before,—always, every moment of his mediatorial reign. It is declared that his dominion over his enemies shall be, absolutely, universal at the time of their resurrection. But this is impossible, if, then, the second death or any other death shall continue to maintain its dominion over any part of the creation of God. Words could not more plainly and strongly express the grand doctrine of the eventual holiness and happiness of all mankind. And is not this a consummation infinitely desirable? Will it hurt or grieve anybody to believe that all sinners will one day be converted, and be made the willing, happy, rejoicing children of the universal Father?

Paul says that at the end of Christ's mediatorial reign, all mankind, (literally all, as no one attempts to deny,) "*shall be made alive in Christ.*" The phrase to be "*in Christ*" is employed throughout the New Testament to signify the being like Christ —the being his pure and obedient disciple. "If any man is *in Christ* he is a new creature." 'There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are *in Christ Jesus*," &c. That is, all will be raised from the dead to live forever. In that future, immortal state all will be free from sin. At the end of the world then, there will be no such thing as

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the resurrection of a part of mankind to suffer an endless damnation. Never was a doctrine taught more manifestly false and unscriptural, than this idea of eternal, hopeless despair. Human creeds affirm, that at death we are to go hence into a future state of rewards or punishment; but the Son of God affirms that he will judge men in this world, and render unto every one according to his deeds on earth. Human creeds say that the punishments connected with the immortal state, will be endless in their duration. Jesus Christ says that all mankind in the resurrection state, "neither marry nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, in consequence of their being the children of the resurrection." Human creeds assert that those Jews to whom our Lord said in the parable, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire," were sent away to endure a punishment that will never end. Nevertheless, there is nothing in the Bible susceptible of clearer proof, than the final sal vation of these very Jews, whose punishment is called everlasting (like the covenant of circumcision, the priesthood of Phineas, the possession of land of Canaan, and numerous other things that have long since come to an end).

For the apostle asserts, that "God hath concluded all the *Jews* in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the deliverer, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and all of them shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest." And "to know God is eternal life." Scattered throughout the Scriptures are such declarations as the following: "The Lord doth not chide forever. The Lord will not cast off forever. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. He will not retain his displeasure forever,

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because he delighteth in mercy." Jesus says to the Father, "Thou hast given me all flesh, (mankind) that I might give unto them eternal lile. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will who hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me (all mankind) I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Paul says, "All mankind shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." (See Professor Stuart's Commentary on Romans 8:21). Also, "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience all were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, all shall be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that sin might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did *much more* abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, *even so* might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (See again Professor Stuart's Notes on the 5th chapter of Romans.

Texts enough, of the same import might be quoted to fill an octavo volume. Admit that there is another class of passages in the Bible which flatly contradicts the above quotations, and you subvert at once the authority of revelation, and reduce it to the level of other wretched superstitions, which in different ages and lands, have taken possession in turn, of the popular belief. It is impossible, therefore, that the damnation mentioned in John 5: 28, 29, should refer to a punishment which is to be inflicted upon the wicked in the future, immortal state of existence.

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CHAPTER XI.

ON GRACE.

GRACE is a term very commonly used in the New Testament, and in all the writings and conversations of the Christian world. This word has many different acceptations both in Scripture and theology, a particular statement of which, is not necessary to my present purpose.

Every writer that I have looked into, from the earliest ages of the Church to the present time, among other definitions of that grace revealed in the gospel, lays down the following as the most prominent of all: "The grace of God through Christ, is his eternal, almighty, wise, and immutable purpose to bestow eternal life, final salvation, or future, immortal holiness and happiness upon mankind irrespective of *their merits.*" "Salvation by grace," says Locke, "must be resolved wholly into the absolute, resistless, and *irrespective* will of God." By this last phrase he means a *divine will*, "which does not allow any form of guilt, unbelief, or obstinacy — any circumstances whatever — to prevent, or successfully oppose the renewal, and sanctification of all the sinners whom Jesus came to redeem." "When it is said salvation is of grace," asserts Calvin, "we understand by the language, that the immortal lie which God will bestow upon his children, is a blessing entirely unmerited, undeserved by them. If they had what they most justly deserve, eternal,

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inevitable ruin would be their destination." This idea he repeats in every form of the most explicit, and emphatic phraseology.

Dr. Doddridge teaches, "that a title to the kingdom of God cannot be earned, purchased, bought, or secured by any exercises, doings or possessions within our reach. Heaven is offered to us simply as a free gift, a present, or a gratuity. Continually do the inspired writers remind us that we cannot claim the happiness of a future existence, as a reward, compensation, or consequence of any goodness, any amount or kind of moral excellence which we can acquire, or any actions which we can perform this side the grave."

So taught the Son of God. "Likewise ye, when ye shall have done all *those things* which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants — we have only done that which was our duty to do." (Luke 17: 10.) True it is that although the obedience of man is not profitable to God, and imposes on him no obligation to render a reward as of debt, still it is in the highest degree profitable to ourselves here on earth. The good man enjoys peace, happiness, the testimony of an approving conscience: the bad man brings upon himself innumerable forms of trouble and sorrow, in time. And these are the only rewards or punishments ever referred to in Scripture. For in all those formulas which speak of the good as enjoying the reward of happiness not only *here*, but *hereafter*, there is no allusion to the immortal existence. In the New Testament *here* and *hereafter* do not mean *time* and *eternity*, but the present or *Jewish dispensation*, as contrasted with the *Christian dispensation*, which was then future. Uniformly among the Hebrews of our Saviour's time, these words: "The *present world*," and the "*world to come*," were employed to express different eras of time. That such was the meaning of Jesus

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is evident from the fact, that he declared in his discourse with the Sadducees, that all mankind, irrespective of character, would enter the resurrection state, and there *be equal to the angels, and become the children of God.*

The instructions of Paul on this subject are strictly in accordance with the statements above made. He teaches, that if future immortal happiness is, in strictness, a bestowment of grace, then it follows as a necessary consequence, that it will not be conferred on any one on account of the good works which he has done. For, if it be given in consideration of performances by which it has been merited, then there is no grace displayed in its bestowal — it has been earned and is due to the recipient, on the principle of justice, as a reward. Paul argues, Rom. 3: 23, &c., thus: "All mankind have sinned, and consequently are equally helpless and guilty; and as God is no respecter of persons, all human creatures being equally his offspring, and there being no *reason* why *one* should be preferred before *another*, therefore his boundless mercy has embraced ALL. He declares the inability of man to save himself by works. For all have failed of rendering to God that glory which was so justly his due, and since salvation is wholly the fruit of divine mercy, no one can lay claim to it on the ground of equity, or merit. It is conferred upon men *freely*, not of obligation, or as a reward for anything which they had earned."

The divine grace is the only legitimate ground for the assurance of salvation. Such is the manner in which Paul uniformly represents its bestowment. Human exertions on the platform of merit, are entirely inadequate. Such exertions had never been successful, up to the time when the apostles wrote. They have been equally unsuccessful until now. There is no good reason to expect a different

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result, while the world standeth. But the grace of God through Christ is superabounding and infinite, and will secure the desired result. As a just God, our Father will "render to every man according to his deeds." As a Saviour, his grace will be manifested in causing "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." For this purpose the "Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world;" and he exhibited "his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In the divine grace alone we may securely trust. The Father is greater than all, and none shall be able to pluck us out of his hands. Nothing can separate us from that love manifested in his Son.

Men's attempts at obedience in this world, through the natural and necessary result of faith in Jesus, are not the procuring cause of any blessing which awaits them beyond the grave. Our Lord came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He assures us that if a man could be found on earth perfectly free from sin, during his whole life, he could not even then claim immortal happiness on account of his good deeds, but simply as a recipient of divine mercy. For the virtues which he might exercise previous to his death, he would receive a perfect recompense in the body. Wherefore, the apostle teaches, that the Father will save men, without regard to the works of the law previously performed. He does not mean to say that Christianity does not *produce* good works, or that real Christians will not obey the holy, and be holy: but that no righteousness of their own will be the ground of their justification. They are all sinners, and as such can no have no claim to be treated as righteous. Paul urges the importance of good works as much as any other writer in the New Testament, but affirms repeatedly, and in the strongest terms, that

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they are not to be relied upon as a ground of justification.

These statements are in accordance with the written creeds of all Christendom; yet every Sunday we hear ministers declare from their pulpits that faith, repentance, and the forsaking of all unrighteousness on earth, are indispensably necessary *to entitle us* to the blessings of everlasting life. In their creeds they say that *good works* can have no efficacy in procuring our salvation: in their sermons they assert directly the reverse of this, that without *good works* performed on earth, no one can be saved. It is self-evident that these propositions are inconsistent, and mutually subversive of each other. Only one of them can be true. "If salvation be by works, then it is no more grace," says Paul, "but if it be by grace, then it is no more works."

I heard a clergyman, a few days ago, explain this subject to his congregation in the following manner:—"Although the grace of God is the only efficient cause of men's salvation, yet it is promised to none but those who exercise faith and obedience in the present life." But remember that faith and obedience are nothing but *good works.* Upon this theory, then, eternal life is bestowed upon men on account of what they have been and done, and not on account of grace, irrespective of works. Let me offer an illustration: Suppose a certain father has a young son who dislikes the study of arithmetic. As a stimulus he says to him—"My son, if you will learn the multiplication table, so as to repeat the whole of it without making a single mistake, in one week, I will give you fifty dollars." Excited by a promise originating in mere grace, or love, the little boy applies himself with all his might, and accomplishes his task on the terms prescribed. Can he not, in that case, claim the fifty dollars as a debt, upon the principles of equity? The father

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was not bound in strict justice to make the aforesaid promise, but its conditions being complied with, the fulfilment of it is not a matter of grace, but of justice. He cannot withhold the stipulated reward without committing an act of the grossest iniquity. If heaven is bestowed on men conditionally, then all who comply with the conditions can claim it as an equitable reward for such a compliance. There is no more grace in this than there is in paying your hired man the wages which you promised him.

Now, it is alleged that the teaching which represents God as saving men by his grace alone, opens the very floodgates of iniquity, and throws up the reins loose upon the neck of every wicked passion that the vicious may choose to indulge. "If God will overlook our transgressions, though we die disobedient; if our good works this side the grave contribute nothing towards the certainty of our final salvation, then, it is said, religion is useless and piety a burden. In that case we had better enjoy the pleasures of sin, and take our fill of iniquity." Even Dr. Channing has asserted: "To suppose that one who is an utter reprobate when he breathes his last is destined infallibly one day to enter the mansions of the blest, is a teaching more than absurd; it is glaringly licentious. It tends to subvert all those wholesome restraints and good moral principles on which the peace, welfare, and very existence of society depend."

The Jews in Paul's time made this same objection to the doctrine of a free salvation by grace only. How did he answer the objection? Simply by asserting that faith in the universal love of God, so far from encouraging men in sin is the only principle which can effectually restrain and sanctify them. This argument he unfolds fully in Rom. 6th chapter. Let the vilest man on earth imbibe a correct, strong perception of saving grace through

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Jesus, that moment he would be inspired with a divine life, and be regenerated. He would immediately cease from deliberate transgression, resist all moral evil, dash to the ground the most sparkling cup of unlawful pleasure, and rise to the enjoyment of that spiritual good which infinite love has prepared for our present and everlasting inheritance. This answer was perfectly conclusive, then, and will serve to sweep away all similar objections to the end of time. "The *goodness* of God leadeth to repentance." This sentiment is reiterated on almost every page of the gospel.

The apostle commands every Christian to esteem others as *better than himself*. At first sight this precept may seem to inculcate what is wrong, and even impossible. Can one who is pre-eminent in wisdom and worth regard the vile and degraded around him as superior to himself in moral excellence? Can he bring himself to feel that the intemperate man, and the sober, the licentious and self-governed, the mean and the noble, have an equal claim to God's favor and blessing? Could he so pervert his mental constitution—his natural sense of justice as to regard the vicious as highly as the virtuous? Can the Creator himself do so? I reply, it may be in the power of the good man to cherish essentially the sentiment recommended by the apostle. He may reflect that possibly the worst person in the circle of his acquaintance, who has cast off all the restraints of reason and conscience, and is so immeasurably below him in the social scale, is no more guilty in the sight of God than himself. Is it not plain that such a view of the lost and fallen around him would tend to nourish in his bosom the liveliest sensibilities to their wants, sins, and sorrows?

But, again, persons ask, is it reasonable for a Christian to suppose that the worst person whom he knows is no more unworthy in the sight of Heaven

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than he is himself? I answer this question in the affirmative. To those who may doubt the correctness of such a position, I would address the following reflections:—It is admitted, universally, that there is an essential difference between the commission of sinful acts, and what is termed guilt. To be sure they are very nearly allied, yet they must not be confounded as absolutely identical. To adopt a conversational style, I would say that a small amount of sinning may involve a large share or amount of guilt. On the contrary, a person may spend a long life in performing sinful actions, and thereby contract very little guilt—under certain circumstances none at all.

I must give an explanation. It is a maxim among all moralists, divines, and ethical writers, that the actual guilt or criminality of a sinner, other things being equal, is in exact proportion to the opportunities of virtue with which he has been favored. The Bible tells us that when the unenlightened heathen do wrong acts, the Omniscient Judge imputeth to them a degree of criminality in accordance with the light which they have enjoyed and abused. But for doing the same things we are regarded as unspeakably more to blame than they, because we have the principles of Christianity, science, refinement, and the highest forms of civilization. Nobody, I presume, will deny this position. It is easy, then, to see that the criminality of one whose life has been marked by extraordinary excellence, may be so enhanced, or aggravated by the superior moral advantages allotted to him, as to preponderate over, or outweigh that of the most fallen and forbidding sinner in the community. For the actual guilt of this degraded man is proportionate to the moral helps and appliances bestowed upon him.

Perhaps these were singularly small. His mind was originally very inferior. "The intellect of a person," says Dr. Rush, in one of his celebrated

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medical works, "may be so weak that he cannot be considered an accountable agent." Besides, the circumstances of his life have been most unpropitious. In the beginning he was thrown upon the world an helpless orphan, grew up amidst physical sufferings of the severest kind, and was familiarized to every form of vice. More, he was bred to look upon many sins as the climax of honor and wisdom. He was not so much as initiated into the rudiments of knowledge—could neither read, write, nor cipher. All his mental capabilities have been crushed by the iron hand of want, folly, and misfortune. Now, under such circumstances, is it not possible that although he has trampled on the most sacred laws of God and man—done the most revolting things—that his actual guilt before the Omniscient Judge is less than that of the most eminent saint among his cotemporaries?

I have not the slightest doubt that there have been frequent occurrences like the following:—A poor man, really guilty, has been arraigned, tried, condemned, and executed for murder, when, in the sight of Heaven, there was less guilt in his bosom than that belonging to the best member of the court, jury, or counsel, by whose instrumentality his fate was sealed—less, it may be, than any of the crowd which followed him with hisses and execrations to the scaffold—even less, perhaps, than that of the clergyman who addressed the throne of grace in his behalf as he was being launched into eternity. Solemn and admonitory reflection!

Let me not be understood as advocating that mawkish sentimentality which would exempt the unfortunate culprit from legal punishment. The civil law cannot entertain those apologies for sinners above mentioned. They can have no place except before the bar of God. The head of that man, who, with a sane mind, takes the life of a fellow-being, must, as the laws now stand, pay the awful penalty

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of his transgression. Yet it will do us no hurt to remember that if his lot had been different—if from early years he had been surrounded with the means of intellectual and moral improvement, instead of ending his life on the gallows, he might have been a luminary, an honor, charm, and blessing to society. *Then* he might have descended to his grave "full of days and honor." A city, state, nation, or a world might have mourned over his decease. His memory, in that case, instead of being accursed, might have been handed down to posterity, watered by the tears of joy and gratitude, green, flourishing, and fragrant through the long succession of ages. Paul says, "that whatever may be our superiority over others, it can be no legitimate ground of boasting. It is the gift of God, and entitles us to no peculiar privileges. He alone has made us to differ from the most fallen and unhappy of those around us."

At any rate such reflections are fitted to soften the heart; to lay the axe at the root of pride, vanity, conceit, and Pharisaism; and to breathe into the soul the kind, gentle, loving spirit of angels, that long-suffering, forbearance and tender sympathies which constitute the life, soul, essence, and crowning ornament of the Christian character. The Son of God requires us to cherish the most lively and intense sensibilities to the wants, sufferings, and welfare of all in the circle of our intercourse, irrespective of their characters, because they are infinitely dear to our Heavenly Father. The best are full of frailty and sin. The gospel teaches in the most unqualified manner that it is nothing but the grace of God that saves the greatest saint on earth from being as bad as the worst of criminals. It was the wise, merciful providence of God that ordained for him a more favorable lot, and threw around him the various circumstances which secured his superior exaltation and blessedness.

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Paul declares, that salvation by grace through Christ, is founded upon the fact, that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; and, therefore, no one can truly say, however pure he may be, that he is more *deserving* of future happiness, than the most wicked of his neighbors. Let men believe that they can purchase the divine favor, or become entitled to peculiar privileges after death, or obtain some vantage-ground over others, by their good works here: then they will inevitably cherish the pride, boasting, and conceit of those Pharisees in the parable spoken by our Lord, "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others." Let men consider themselves worthy of higher honor and a richer reward hereafter, in consequence of their present holiness, of course they will regard with feelings of the strongest repugnance, and perhaps anger, the suggestion that the finally impenitent will be treated with as much favor as themselves, in a future state.

But, our Lord Jesus Christ in the parable of the prodigal Son, in Matt. 20: 1—10, and many other places, represents all as entirely devoid of merit in the sight of God, and entirely dependent on his grace for the bestowment of eternal life. He teaches that for all our good works, we are fully, completely rewarded this side the grave, and beyond we shall all be equally the recipients of divine mercy; and unable to say concerning a single item of bliss which we may receive, that it had been earned or merited by our own previous achievements. In the coming world we shall see and feel our indebtedness to the mercy of God for all our enjoyments, of every kind. We shall have the spirit of the apostle when he exclaimed, "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I but the grace of God

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which was with me, 1 Cor. 15: 10. So the Psalmist expresses it. "Not unto us, O Lord but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

If I am a truly enlightened Christian, I shall not lead a religious life with the expectation that it will better my condition, at all, after death, and shall rejoice in the belief that the most unhappy and destitute around me, will finally be made partakers of celestial glory, instead of congratulating myself on account of a supposed superiority, as if I could do anything. towards attaining immortal happiness by my imperfect obedience. A moment's reflection might convince the most superficial thinker that this is the true position. For Paul assures us that in order to be admitted to the heavenly world, "We must be changed from sin to holiness, from dishonor to glory, from weakness to power, from the natural state to the spiritual, from the earthy to the unearthly, from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality." He also teaches that, at death, the best persons are only sanctified in part—that to the last, in a greater or less degree, they are the subjects of pain, disease, frailty, error, sin and suffering. These evils are removed by the resurrection—by an act of Almighty power, which by our personal efforts we could no more influence—aid or retard — than we can the rising or setting of the sun, or the revolution of the earth on its axis. And this change in man which is to be effected by the resurrection, will pervade our moral as well as physical nature, will result in making us equal to the angels, and the spotless, perfectly holy children of the Most High. It is self-evident, that if all are alike undeserving of admission to the resurrection state, then it is entirely consistent with the perfections of God, to bestow this mercy upon the whole race, irrespective of their condition and character on earth.

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"All are his; for he created them. All may securely trust in him, for he is the Father of the spirits of all flesh. All may look to him with a joyful hope of deliverance from the bondage of sin, and the enjoyment of eternal life; for he hath given assurance that his grace superabounds over sin, and that although all have sinned, they shall be justified freely (undeservedly) by his grace, which shall reign through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord." Adam Clarke, the Methodist commentator, says on the text, Rom. 3: 28. "As God is no respecter of persons, all human creatures being equally his offspring, and there being no reason why one should be preferred before another, therefore his boundless mercy has embraced all." On the same text, Dr. Barnes, the Presbyterian expounder, remarks, "As all had alike sinned, Jews and Gentiles, and as the plan of salvation was adapted to sinners, without distinction, so God could consistently show favors to all, and all might be admitted on the same terms to the benefits of the plan of salvation. This is the uniform showing of the New Testament, that we are utterly unable by faith, obedience, or any other means to do anything towards qualifying ourselves for immortal happiness beyond the grave.

It is asked of what use, then, is religion in the present world, upon the principle, that if the soul of a sinner is not converted before death, it will be reclaimed in some of the years, ages, centuries, or cycles of a coming eternity. With this view objectors inquire, what consequence can we attach to the immediate reformation of a sinner. And this question is proposed as if it were fraught with cutting, and decisive reproach; as if it convicted us of folly; as if it pointed to some radical defect in that peculiar system of faith which we advocate.

To my mind this objection is exceedingly weak. I wonder that it should have the slightest weight up-

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on any reflecting mind. Suppose as you are stepping out of your house, some morning, to go to your business, you were to meet a litter passing into the next door, on which was borne a dear acquaintance, who had just been blown up by the bursting of a steamboat boiler. He is very badly scalded. His wounds and bruises are terrible. He cries aloud in excruciating agony. Of course, feeling for him the deepest sympathy, you leave your business undone, and spend the morning in doing all in your power to minister to the sufferer. Now, imagine a bystander, looking on with the utmost apparent coolness and indifference to say, "Why should you trouble yourself so much about the sufferings of your friend? At the worst they will be short, and transitory. They cannot last through eternity. The pangs and woes of this evanescent state are not worthy of consideration." What anxieties and prayers, what perils and treasures were expended in the search for the late Sir John Franklin? Did they not reflect the highest honor on our common humanity. "O, no!" some one may have said; "they were entirely misdirected, and uncalled for. Because, if this noble, adventurous navigator suffer ever so much and so long in the polar seas and ice, his case is hardly worth our sympathy. For his trials cannot be literally endless, and are therefore undeserving of our serious regard." Would such reasoning sound like words of wisdom, or like the words of consummate folly, and hard-heartedness?

How much more applicable is such an argument to a case of mental suffering? What are the wounds and bruises of the body compared with the pangs which sin inflicts upon the soul—a soul struck, burnt, blackened, blasted, by the lightning of guilty passions—which crush it down to untold, and inconceivable anguish! He who looks sympathetically upon suffering does not estimate it so much by its

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duration as severity. To save a single person from even one year of sinful degradation, is an object whose magnitude finite minds are unable to calculate. In addition, think of the superabounding evil that fills the world. Look abroad upon the countless miseries inflicted by fraud, falsehood, strife, hatred, war; upon the indescribable woes of intemperance, libertinism, gambling, crime, want, destitution—upon "all the ten thousand minor diversities and shadings of guilt and guilty sorrow," and then may we realize the value and importance of a religious faith, this side the grave; which if universal, would put an end to all these innnumerable and amazing evils, and raise the world to the standard of millenial perfection and glory.

Angels have told us that Jesus Christ came to promote "Peace, and good will among men." It is a reflection that often visits my mind—What a beautiful world would this be, if Christian sympathy, love and kind offices were extended to all who need them! There is regard enough for the great, prosperous, powerful, and admired. But they can get along without it. O! my soul sickens when I think of the fallen, and unhappy of earth, on whom no one smiles, who have no help and encouragement from others to break their fetters, and rise from degradation to the dignity of mental and moral excellence. As I gaze upon the mournful scene, I bless God that through his Son, we have a religion, which was given to reform, and elevate the sinful—that can stay the bitter waters that flow so abundantly from the fountains of scorned, and neglected vice—that can soothe and calm the agonized bosoms of those, who are trodden into the dust by the iron-hand of want, crime and misfortune.

In times past, we have had enough of the mere announcement of beautiful truths by the pulpit, and religious literature. The world now needs a new

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dispensation—a new era—an era of practical Christianity—an era in which the great object of honor shall be in not being a hearer only, but also a doer of the truth. When I reflect upon the wrongs, injustice and inequalities which prevail in society, I cannot but exclaim—Would that a mighty voice from Heaven might break forth on this lost, slumbering world! Not in the tones and menaces of eternal wrath, but in the accents of Infinite Love—in melodious notes, sweeter than the music of angels: reviving the "dead in trespasses and sins," inspiring and lifting up the hearts of those who are earnestly striving to promote the advancement of truth and happiness. O! how beautiful are the tears of Christian sympathy that fall upon the erring, and grief-torn pilgrim of earth. Nothing else on his foot-stool appears more glorious in the sight of God. Angels bear them up to the bosom of the Father, as a cheering sign that man is not wholly abandoned to evil,—that the work of redemption is steadily advancing, and that better fates and fortunes are in store for our long misguided and unhappy race.

Throughout the New Testament we are assured that Christianity is calculated, in the highest degree, to glorify God. The sacred writers also teach that the peculiar and distinguishing glory of our Creator is a boundless sensibility to the interests, wants, welfare, injuries, sorrows and distresses of all the sinful children of men, without distinction. In addition, we are told that this divine sensibility as far surpasses any feelings of kindness which the most perfect of earthly parents can cherish towards their children, as the infinite exceeds the finite. With the Supreme Parent it is a principle which has no limits, which cannot be turned into indifference, coldness, or hatred; can never, for a single instant, intermit its sublime intensity, strength and tenderness—which can never change, waver, tire or fail, but must

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outlast, survive, and triumph over all human guilt and unworthiness. In proof of this doctrine, our Lord refers us to the phenomena of the outward and visible creation. All sinners have the same right and interests in the great globe made for our habitation. The rain and sun descend alike on the evil and good. Jesus tells us that the Father actually receives more pleasure in witnessing the return of one sinner to the paths of peace, than in the contemplation of the countless millions of the just, who have never sinned. What a thought! It is one of the best arguments for the divinity of the gospel. It is certain that an uninspired mind of any age or clime, could never have hit upon such a wonderful, glorious idea. The Son of God affirms that he was commissioned to say to the *worst* of sinners, that it is the infinite pleasure of the Father to employ his amazing attributes in upholding, providing for, and blessing him forever — in securing his present and everlasting welfare. He constantly declares that it is the supreme glory of his Father to sympathize with the most debased and guilty, and to do all in his power to reform and elevate them. He tells us that it was to gratify the love of God that the Son appeared on earth to taste death for every man — the painful and ignominious death of the cross — and thus to open a way through the grave to the wonders and glories of an immortal world — the destined inheritance of entire humanity. Can God's love be disappointed?

Christianity, though simple in its style and expression, contains the elements of a science so vast, sublime, transcendental and boundless, that very few comparatively, of those who read the Bible, have received into their widest and loftiest imaginings the ideal even of that profound and comprehensive philosophy taught by the Son of God. This is not, perhaps, to be wondered at, when all things apper-

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taining to the subject are taken into the account. "Art is long, and life is short," says the old proverb. Then, Christianity has been so narrowed and vulgarized in the general thought of mankind, that it is very hard to draw general attention to the true forms and proportions of its peculiar wisdom and beauty. There are other difficulties in the way. Imprisoned in tabernacles of clay; moving almost upon the same spot from the cradle to the tomb; surrounded by the innumerable frailties and limitations of a mortal lot; enveloped from the beginning in the thick, almost impervious mists of sin and ignorance that settle down on these dark shores of time; having been brought up under circumscribed, narrow, prejudiced, perhaps, sectarian and bigoted influences; from the suitable age having been devoted so exclusively to secular pursuits — mankind at large have not availed themselves of the requisite opportunities; have not read enough, thought enough, and prayed enough to become initiated even into the rudiments of the Gospel revelation. And those belonging to the clerical profession have, to a great extent, it is feared, spent much more time in exploring the philosophy of peculiar theological systems than in the diligent, faithful perusal and interpretation of the New Testament writings.

It seems to me that the leading thoughts which pervade and characterize the discourses of our Saviour are the following. First, there is only one God, one uncreated Being, possessed of infinite power, wisdom and goodness — the undivided, indivisible Maker, Ruler, and Father of all created intelligences. Secondly, his moral essence is unmixed, unchanging love — a love commensurate with the boundlessness of his nature, attributes, and works. Thirdly, all spiritual beings are united to him by ties of affection which no finite power can

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break. Fourthly, one moral, accountable being, is just as dear and important in the sight of God as another, however sinful or insignificant he may appear in the view of men. The vilest reprobate is of equal consequence to himself and the universe, as the loftiest angel who has never sinned. Fifthly, the family of man are so bound together in origin, character, sympathy, and destination, that one cannot be saved unless all are saved. Or, in other words, Jesus came not to save an inconsiderable number, but to redeem entire humanity. Sixthly, our sensibilities and kind deeds towards any person should be just in proportion to the depth of his sin, unworthiness, and degradation.

These are a few of the great principles, either explicitly expressed or implied throughout the New Testament Scriptures. "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." How different are the inhabitants in that upper world from those of earth! What occasions the greatest joy among unrenewed men? Enlarged means of selfish and luxurious indulgence. The inebriating cup. The sumptuous banquet. Wealth, rank, fashion, genius, and learning, the creations of art, military triumphs, and the various circumstances which flatter pride, ambition or vanity. *There* the reformation of the meanest, lowliest, guiltiest, most despised sinner, inspires the celestial hosts with the highest transports of which they are capable — greater, more thrilling than those felt on that eventful day spoken of by Job, "When the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy, over the creation of a new family of planets, as they began to wheel in grandeur their ever-enduring and harmonious courses through the fields of space. Who can grasp in conception, or worthily paint in words such magnificent realities? Who can offer an idea, picture, fact, or argument, to illustrate and enforce

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this sublime sentiment? It is a subject that swells beyond the ken of mortal minds. It rests upon the simple assertion of the Son of God, who uttered only the words of truth, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance."

From these words may be derived those elements or principles which demonstrate the character of man's final destiny. They teach us what that sympathy is which Jesus enjoins on us all. We should cherish a strong, lively, intense longing, accompanied with corresponding efforts to reform, alleviate, and bless all the sinners within our reach. This is the noblest endowment which we can possess. It is the distinguishing attribute of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, angels, the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven, and the spirits of the just made perfect. It is the only source and means of a happy and useful life. It is the germ and element of all true greatness. As to religion, our emotional attainments are much more important than the intellectual. A minister may have very moderate abilities and learning, yet, if his soul be imbued with the large and generous spirit of the gospel, his preaching will be more effective than any amount of mere erudition could make it, unaccompanied with the advantages of an impassioned and stirring desire to promote the spiritual exaltation of his fellow beings. If we feel right towards others, all will be right. If our predominant feelings resemble those of Christ, duties will continually flow from us free, pure, sparkling, and salubrious as the sweet waters of a perennial spring. Happy is the man whose moral sensibilities are ever lively, deep, fervent, and preponderating!

One of the severest forms of moral discipline to which Christians are subjected, arises from the fact

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that we are constantly brought in contact with those faults and follies, those multifarious errors and transgressions abounding among men, which tend to discourage, impair, and even destroy the feelings that have just been described. I will offer an illustration. With many of us one of the first things done in the morning is to look into a newspaper to see what has been passing the last twenty-four hours in the world around us. We spread out the document, and find therein many shocking recitals. In one place is an item of cruel murder committed under the most atrocious and aggravated circumstances. In another we see the words, "bold and daring robbery," or an account of incendiarism which has destroyed a vast amount of property, or an appalling suicide, or a flagrant breach of trust, &c. Now imagine a perfect Christian, whose life has been spent in some secluded vale, surrounded with none but the wise and good. He has never travelled, nor so much as heard that newspapers exist. For the first time one is put into his hands, and he is assured that it is a picture of what is going on in the great world beyond the narrow district to which he is confined. What emotions of unutterable horror would be awakened in his bosom by reading the things just named! Would he not shudder and grow sick at heart? But what is the effect on the minds of those of us who are daily familiar with such descriptions? With regard to myself, I am ashamed to say, that though I do not read them attentively, yet as my eye glances over the sad records I detect in my bosom a sort of apathy or coldness, which says, "What is that to me?" or, "What is there in robbers and assassins in which I should take any interest?" And, perhaps, some professing Christians find these dark paragraphs more agreeable and edifying than any matters else which the paper contains.

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From the same source we learn that a gentleman of our acquaintance, hitherto of an unblemished reputation — a bright star in the galaxy of men deemed most eminent in society, has been guilty of some astounding misconduct, which has carried desolation into the crushed and bleeding hearts of a large circle of relatives and friends; ruined his own family; robbed widows and orphans; and taken, it may be, from hundreds or thousands of the poor, humble and dependent classes, their last pittance.

I need not multiply instances. The lesson which they convey is obvious. These incessant experiences repeated every hour, day, and week of gross iniquities, and the abominable wrongs that darken the world, and the consequent, almost inevitable exasperation of our minds, tend beyond all calculation, to repress, and chill, and freeze the warm current of forgiving, benevolent emotions, which should ever flow from the hearts of Christians, and shed glory upon their lives. Even good men, by these means, are apt to feel that it is no matter what becomes of the debased and wicked masses around them. They deserve utter perdition, and the sooner they receive their deserts the better. O! hard it is in a world like this to keep our noblest sensibilities from waning — not to allow them under the most forbidding emergencies to intermit their strength and tenderness. It is easy to talk and rail against the sinner. But without due commisseration for his wretchedness, of what use can it be? It even does hurt. It is ruinous to our own spiritual welfare. It prevents us from making proper efforts to benefit our fellow creatures. It prevents us from looking with a suitable frame of mind — with calmness, composure, hope and trust — on that dark, inscrutible, eddying current of sin and sorrow, which is hurrying along so many millions to the ocean of eternity.

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Now, there is only one way in which Christians can resist the impulse to join in the general execration of gross offenders, and to regard them with the coldness and unbending detestation which the first sight of their misdoing is calculated to awaken in the bosoms of all beholders. This is the deep conviction that the most guilty, gloomy, hardened transgressor, whose soul has been steeped in crime, bitterness, and desperation, though fallen, is not lost; that one day he will put off the mortal to be clothed with the incorruptible, and rise to a higher sphere of being — to expatiate over those unimaginable scenes, where all men, eventually, freed from sin, will commune with angels, and bask in the fadeless light and glories of that land where pains and partings are unknown. We could not have those sensibilities for the sinful, essential to the Christian character, if we believed that God hated them and was determined to banish them from his presence forever.

We are reminded by our Lord that angels walk with us unseen. For, they sympathize with us which would not be possible, if they lived too far off in some distant remote orb, to make us the objects of constant observation and regard. Of course, they behold with a clear and unclouded perception all the moral evil on earth. They witness all the scenes and acts of dishonesty, evasion and circumventing, and reckless indulgence—all those violent struggles of hate, envy, pride, malice, and ambition to which reference has just been made. More, they look upon these dark doings with infinite oppugnance—an oppugnance as much greater than we can feel, as heaven is higher than earth. But how do they regard the sinners themselves, who have committed such awful deeds. Why, with all that gentleness of spirit which becomes an angel; with unmixed, tender pity; with a deep, all-subduing love; with that

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dignified, and almost inconceivable elevation of character, that mixes with the greatest disapprobation of the offence, the liveliest compassion for the offender. And the strength of their sensibility is in proportion to the depth of sin, sorrow, and unworthiness which are its object. With respect to the worst sinner living—deserted by the whole world, in the sight of mortals an insulated fragment of hopeless ruin and disgrace—it is certain that the tenderest yearnings of angels gather around him, as he is sinking under the weight of frightful guilt, and will never forsake him till he is reclaimed, — made fit for admission to the glorious abodes of the celestial world.

Nor are we left in doubt as to the basis on which their sympathies rest. They cannot be actuated by a weak, unfounded, morbid, sentimentalism. "Sons of the Morning," they must estimate sinners according to their intrinsic value. They love only what ought to be loved. They sympathize with those only who are deserving of their sympathy. Their feelings towards the poor sinner arise from the fact that he is a being just as important to God and the universe as the loftiest cherubim who has never sinned. They see that his destruction would work out infinite ruin to others. Natural philosophers teach that the smallest particle of dust cannot be spared—that it is necessary to the good of the whole—that if annihilated, all the worlds which roll in space would be thrown into confusion and perish. So in the spiritual universe, there is not one intelligent being however depraved, whose ruin would not involve that of millions upon millions. The vilest sinner cannot be spared. He was made to occupy a certain niche. If he be swept into nothing, the post which he was ordained to fill will be forever vacant. No other person can move in the particular circle that he was created for. Omnipotence is able to preserve all, but cannot allow one thing to

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perish, without destroying all things else. In that case it would be necessary to put aside the old system entirely, and reconstruct a new, but imperfect one. So that the ground of the sympathy between angels and the sinner, is not simply the sinner's consequence as endowed with a divine, immortal nature, but also the absolute, eternal necessity of the relation which he sustains to the glory of God and the perfection of his universe. They imperatively demand the reformation and eternal life of all corrupt, and abandoned spirits.

The accomplishment of this object brought down the heaven-appointed messenger from the bosom of a Father's love to teach man his duty and destination, and to inspire him with proper sentiments of regard for truth and a brother's welfare. And this most compassionate Saviour was the brightness of the eternal glory, the express image of the self-existent and unchanging Creator. Though so great, how kind were his words! How tender his sympathies! Though with dignified, yet becoming severity, he reproved the proud, self-righteous scribes and Pharisees; yet he weeps in view of the terrible sufferings which he foresaw they were destined to endure, in consequence of their obstinate and blind rejection of the blessed truths that he taught. And when these persecutors had nailed him to the cross, he prays for their forgiveness, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." But the feelings of God and his beloved Son are identical. His will is the will of the eternal Father, for they are *one—one* in purpose, *one* in love. The love of Christ was but the reflection of a Father's boundless sympathy. So in the cross we behold no display of divine wrath, but only the triumph of immortal, never-dying love. For Jesus declares: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all

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men unto me;" by which words, as John asserts, he signified what death he should die.

Thus the blood of Christ poured out on the cross, is to be regarded as the infallible pledge that his mission shall be fully accomplished; and that, as he has tasted death for every man, so every man must, sooner or later, by the wonders of that sympathy which beam from the summit of Calvary, be drawn to the perception—the enjoyment of God and a heavenly state. An apostle affirms that the death and resurrection of our Saviour are the sure guarantee that the *divine purpose* will, through him, be ultimately fulfilled. This purpose, he goes on to say, is to save all souls, without an exception, from sin and death, and deliver those who, through fear of the grave, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Such a doctrine renders the Christian revelation unspeakably dear to every noble heart. This redeems the divine character from the charge of cruelty in creating, as some have falsely supposed, millions of rational beings, with the certain knowledge that their existence would prove an everlasting curse. What is the difference between a benevolent Creator, who torments some of his creatures to all eternity, and one who does the same thing to gratify his malevolence?

This, then, is the distinguishing glory of the gospel; it reveals to us a life of glory, honor, peace, and endless progress for all who die. It makes us certain that the dead are embraced in the bosom of Infinite Love; that they are treading those verdant, beautiful shores where storms and clouds are unknown—where in the bloom of youth and happiness, throughout the ceaseless round of revolving ages, they shall continually ascend to higher planes of knowledge, to sublimer joys, and to brighter and more glorious visions of immortal love and beauty.

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What, therefore, in the light of these truths, is the nature of a Christian hope? Does that man possess it, who expects only that himself and family, and a narrow circle of intimate friends—his little church, and the few churches that harmonize with it in principles—will be saved, and all the rest of the world will be consigned to helpless ruin? Is that a Christian hope which holds that the day is coming when our Creator, in the exercise of a stern, unrelenting hatred towards sinners, will arise and cut asunder the ties that unite them to his throne, and allow them to drift out from the shore of peace and safety upon the surge of perdition, to be driven onward, onward, and onward, till finally they will get forever beyond the reach and resources of even Omnipotent mercy? Is that a Christian hope which denies that each person is bound to his neighbor by affections so intimate, endeared, and endearing, that he cannot be perfectly happy himself so long as he sees those around him involved in guilt and pain? Is that a Christian hope which flays the great body of humanity alive, and strews its ruptured, lacerated, bleeding fragments upon the wide field of utter desolation? Is that a Christian hope which immures one part of mankind in the great central dungeons of the universe, from which they are never to be let out, and forbids the remainder to proffer even the boon of condolence and sympathy in behalf of partner, children, and friends, who, by a cruel and inexplicable fate, are severed from them forever?

I would not trouble myself about speculative absurdities, the belief of which could do no hurt to any one. Let them be tolerated so long as they leave us a God whom it is in our power to honor and adore; so long as they allow us to love all our fellow-beings, and embrace them in the arms of faith; so long as they do not rob heaven of all that

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can make heaven desirable. But when theology lays a rash and ruthless hand upon the key-stone of that beautiful arch of mercy which spans our fallen world, towering high into the golden skies; when she divides the human race into two parts, whose characters and interests are to be eternally antagonistic; and after narrowing down the number of the finally saved to an inconsiderable fraction, cuts off all communication between earth and heaven, and holds that saints and angels will cease to sympathize with the sufferings of the lost; but that through eternity they will lift their voices in more rapturous hosannas, as the wailings of woe and despair come up from the countless millions of their outcast brethren — then I thank my Heavenly Father that I may look upon its teachings, but as the shocking dreams of dark and superstitious ages forever gone by.

And what dreams! To have them on the mind but for a single night would be enough to unsettle a soul — to drive reason and peace from its throne forever. A true Christian hope is founded on the announcement of Scripture, that the reformation of a single sinner causes joy in the presence of the angels of God, and consequently the final loss of one soul would fill heaven with tears, clothe its inhabitants in sackcloth, and cause their golden harps to fall tuneless, and unstrung. Instead of singing another joyous anthem they would send forth the strains of anguish, and lamentation through eternity. Even the Creator himself would throw around his throne a thick cloud of mourning and disappointment. The universe itself would become dark, cheerless, and desolate, and all finite intelligences would expire in horror, consternation, and amazement.

Sublime thought! He who turns a sinner from the error of his ways, will forever partake of the joys of this new-born, ransomed spirit; their com-

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mon joy shall vibrate throughout the intelligent creation. I repeat it, sublime thought! The conversion of the lowliest, meanest, guiltiest sinner on earth to-day, would send a thrill of rapture upward — reaching even the millions that surround the eternal throne. This revelation is the basis of the doctrine that entire humanity must be redeemed before one human being can be perfectly happy. Any man's weal or woe is forever identified with that of the race to which he belongs.

The joy of heaven is not yet complete, else it were not capable, as Scripture affirms, of being increased by the repentance of those not yet redeemed. Hence the conclusion is irresistible, that the joy of the celestial world will not reach its maximum, so long as a single sinner in this, or any other part of God's creation remains impenitent, unreformed, unsaved, unblest. This then is the true gospel hope, that the system of grace revealed in the New Testament will go onward, and onward, till in the mighty roll of future ages it shall reach the case of the most desperate soul, and the last wanderer from the paths of peace shall be brought home to his Father's house, amid the acclamations and rejoicings of the whole intelligent universe. Consummation ineffably glorious!

"We cannot go
Where universal love smiles not around,
Sustaining all yon orbs, and all their suns,
From *seeming evil* still educing GOOD,
And better thence *again and better still*,
IN INFINITE PROGRESSION."

Grace! 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear;
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear.

Grace first contrived a way
To save unhappy man,
And all the means that grace display,
Which drew the wondrous plan.

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Grace guides my wandering feet,
To tread the heavenly road;
And new supplies each hour I meet,
While pressing on to God.

Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.

Since many persons are so fond of those exhibitions or statements usually denominated creeds, I will close with an abstract of the leading articles of my religious views.

1. I believe that the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is a divinely inspired and infallible standard of faith and practice.
2. I believe in God, the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost, as they are revealed in Scripture.
3. I believe that Jesus is the Mediator between God and man — the sacrifice for sin, and the Saviour from it, and that the atonement which he made is indispensably necessary to the salvation of sinners.
4 I believe in the conversion and sanctification of the heart by the influences of the Holy Spirit, and that without such influences no one can exercise supreme love to God, and universal love to man.
5. I believe that God will certainly and universally reward and punish men according to their *deserts.*
6. I believe that evangelical repentance, purity of heart, integrity of purpose, and a blameless, holy life, are, invariably, the prerequisites to the enjoyment of eternal happiness.

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7. I believe in constant, unremitting warfare with sin and error; growth in grace; conformity to all the requirements of God's law, and to all the principles and precepts of the Gospel.

8. I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church, in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

9. I believe that he who cordially embraces these truths has a Christian creed, and that —

"He who these duties shall perform,
Faithful and with an honest heart,
Shall safely ride through every storm,
And find, indeed, that better part."

AMEN.

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